The Five Pillars of Islam and Islamic Doctrine

Islam has two sections: "*Iman*" (faith) and "*Din*" (the religious practice which should be the result of faith). Here is a list of six main "articles" of Islamic faith.

"*Iman*" has been defined by Islam as confession with the tongue and belief with the heart as to the truth of Islam. There are six articles of belief that all Muslims must believe:

1. God
2. The Angels of God
3. The Books of God
4. The Prophets of God
5. The Day of Resurrection and Judgement
6. Predestination to good and evil

1. Belief about God

His name – Allah – refers to God's essential being. In sura 7:180 it says. *"And Allah's are the best names"*. There are 99 names of God and whoever recites them all will enter paradise. The 'rosary' ('*subha*') is used by Muslims to help them in reciting these names. It has 33 beads. Sadly there is no bead for 'Allah Mahaba' (God is love). [The name *Al Wudud* – the loving one – occurs twice in the Quran and is seen as a characteristic of the divine will and not as part of God's essential nature.]

God's attributes – there are seven principal ones:

- **Life** (*Hayat*): His existence has neither beginning nor ending.
- **Knowledge** (*Ilm*): He knows all things visible or invisible, past and future. He never forgets, is never negligent and never makes an error.
- **Power** (*Qudra*): Allah is Almighty. Whatever he wills happens. His power is everlasting.
- **Will** (*Irada*): He is able to do what he wills. He need not act. Both good and evil exist by his will. If a man is a pious Muslim it is because of the will of God and if a man is an unbeliever it is due to the will of God.
- **Hearing** (*Sama*) He can hear every sound whether high or low. He hears without ears.
- **Seeing** (*Basr*) He sees all things, even 'the steps of a black cat on a black stone at night'. He is able to see without eyes.
- **Speech** (*Kalam*) He speaks but without a tongue.

The Unity of God (*Tawhid*)

Muslims place the greatest possible emphasis on God's unity. Sura 112:1-4 says, *"Say: he, Allah, is one. Allah is he on whom all depend; he begets not nor is he begotten and no one is like him."*
(This is very often quoted to us as believers!)

The "*Tahlil*" is the first part of the creed and witnesses to the fact that there is no God but God. The association of other gods with God (*shirk*) is the greatest possible sin to a Muslim – see sura 4:48.

The main question most friendly Muslims expect Christians to give a convincing answer to is:
What is the difference between Muslim monotheism and Christian monotheism?
In our answer, it must emerge clearly that believers in the Lord Jesus are truly monotheists without qualification.

God's Greatness

The "*Takbir*" is the name given to the Arabic expression, "*Allahu Akbar*" which means 'God is great'. The Muslim repeats this phrase constantly and it means that no matter what a man can think of, God is greater than that.

The Revelation of God's will

The sending down "*tanzil*" of God's will is the Quran. We believers say that the Lord Jesus is the object of God's revelation, while Islam says it is the Quran.

God's Transcendence (*Tanzih*)

Muslims believe that God is really unknowable. He is separate from all that He has created and his **real self** can never be known by man. Whatever man thinks of him, he is different. He does not exist in anything nor does anything exist in him.

2. The Angels of God

The Quran has a great deal about angels, as do the traditions. Here are a few points:

- The devil was created from fire, men from clay and angels from light.
- Angels have life, speech and reason.
- Angels have no carnal desire or anger. It is said that their food is celebrating God's glory, their drink is proclaiming God's holiness and their pleasure is worshipping God.
- Angels are inferior to human prophets because they were commanded to prostrate themselves before Adam. (sura 2:82)
- Every believer (Muslim) is attended by two recording angels. One records his good actions and the other his evil actions – sura 82:11-12 and 50:14-15.
- There are four archangels: Gabriel – the angel of revelation, Mika'il – the patron of the Jews; Israfil who will sound the trumpet at the last day and Azra'il – the angel of death.
- The chief angel in charge of hell is called Malik (king) and he has 19 other angels to help him (sometimes called guards) – sura 74:30-31.
- There are two angels, Munkar and Nakir, who examine the dead in their graves on the night of their burial to remind them of their faith.
- Angels act as guardians to men – sura 13:11

Jinn

- It is said that God created the jinn 2000 years before Adam.
- There are good jinn and bad jinn.
- They are created from fire like the devil.
- They eat and drink and propagate their species.
- The devil is said to be the father of the jinn.

The Devil (*Iblis/Shaitan*)

- Every man has an angel and a devil appointed over him.
- Every child of Adam, except Jesus and Mary, is touched by the devil at birth. (So the Lord Jesus is sinless!) It is the devil's touch that makes the newborn baby cry at birth.

- He is often called *Ash Shaitan* (the chief devil). He was expelled from Eden because he refused to make submission to Adam – sura 7:11-18.

3. The Books of God

Apparently there are 104 books given by God to mankind.

To Adam 10

To Seth 50

To Enoch 30

To Abraham 10

To Moses 5 (the Tawrat)

To David The Zabbur (Psalms)

To Jesus (Isa) The Injil (Gospel)

To Muhammad The Quran

The books from Adam to Abraham have been lost, but all that is necessary for Muslims to know of these books is to be found in the Quran. Here are a few suras on this subject:

2:4; 35:24; 10:47; 4:164; 4:78

Where there are differences between the Bible and the Quran then the Quran abrogates all previous Scriptures – see suras 5:48; 16:63-64 and 5:8.

4. The Prophets of God

a) ***Nabi*** – anyone directly inspired by God. Muslims accept the Lord Jesus as a "*Nabi*".

b) ***Rasul*** and ***Mursal*** – one to whom a special message has been sent. In the Arabic Bible, Rasul is used for the epistles. The Epistle of Peter is "*Butrus ar rasul*". John the Baptist is called a "*Mursal*".

Apparently in the traditions of Muhammad there were 124,000 prophets (*nabi*) and 315 apostles (*rasul*).

There are Noah, Abraham, David, Jacob, Joseph, Job, Moses, Jesus and Muhammad. These nine are possessors of power.

There are three prophetesses: Sarah, the mother of Moses, and Mary the mother of Jesus.

5. The Day of Resurrection and Judgement

The Last Day has several names in the Quran:

The Day of Uprising 21:47

The Day of Separation 37:5-20

The Day of Awakening 30:56

The Day of Judgement 1:3

There are several other names.

At the resurrection, the body will be raised and united with its soul. One bone in the body, the Holy Bone, will be preserved uncorrupted until the Last Day at which time the rest of the body will grow from it.

The Last Day will be preceded by three blasts of a trumpet. It will be a general resurrection of men, angels, jinn and animals – sura 81.

The length of the Day of Judgement will be 1000 years – sura 32:5. After this God will appear to judge mankind and Muhammad will intercede after Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses and Jesus have declined, feeling themselves unworthy of so great a task.

Each person will be examined from his own book of deeds which have all his words and actions recorded. All the words and deeds will be weighed in a balance scale – one balance being over paradise and the other over hell – sura 21:47

There is no way of salvation in Islam other than works – see the following suras: 18:49; 50:18; 43:80; 80:10-12; 21:94.

Heaven – "the garden"- *al Jannah* or "*Al-Firdaus*" – paradise

According to the Quran it is far better than anything in this world (17:21). Descriptions of heaven are literal and material. God is not in heaven at all. There are said to be seven divisions to heaven – the highest is paradise. God's throne is above them all. See the following suras: 55:46; 104:1-9; 76:4-22; 89:27-30; 17:72.

Hell – the fire – "*an nar*"

The Muslim hell has seven divisions. The Orthodox teaching is that all Muslims will go to hell (19:71), but the top level (*Jahannam*) for Muslims is a type of purgatory for purification and is temporary. For Muslims who have not committed great sins, hell will be cool and pleasant. Infidels who say that God is plural will remain in hell for ever subject to burning flames and icy cold.

The duration in hell – for Muslims it is not everlasting – see suras 6:129 and 11:106-107.

6. Predestination to good and evil

God is absolute in his decree of good and equally of evil. So nothing comes to pass, good or bad, except by divine will – see 14:4 and 54:49.

God is not limited by any moral values. There is a tradition (*Sunna*) that God said, "These to heaven and I care not and these to hell and I care not." God is the sole decider of man's deeds and destiny. This places the responsibility of all that a person does, whether good or evil, upon God. Man is a puppet devoid of free will – a mechanical, programmed being. So in their view, God is unjust, for a man is judged by his deeds for which he is not responsible.

What Muslims should practice – "*Din*" – the Five Pillars of Islam

If an orthodox Muslim read what James 2:14-26 says about the necessary place of "works" and "faith" in true religion, he would be pleased because of the importance attached to both '*iman*' (faith) and '*din*' (works or practical duties). There are five of these usually called the **Pillars of Islam**.

These five pillars are all obligatory duties. There are other duties a Muslim is expected to carry out. These are good and necessary, but not obligatory.

1. Confessing the faith (*Tashahhud or shahadah*)

The first word derives from an Arabic root word which means 'testify'. So a Muslim says, "I testify that there is no God but God; I testify to his unity and that he has no partner; I testify that Muhammad is his servant and his messenger."

2. Salat – prayer – the five daily prayers

These also serve as public, physical evidence of a Muslim's adherence to Islam. But before a Muslim starts to "recite" his prayers, certain proscribed ceremonial ablutions must be performed. These are three kinds, one or the other are used according to the circumstances of the worshipper at the moment:

- ***Wadu*** (the lesser washing) Prayer is only effective if there is ritual cleansing.

  This is the most common form wherever water is available, usually in a mosque or at home and it is necessary before each prayer time. Very precise rules are set down for the washing of four parts of the body – the face from the top of the forehead to the chin and as far as each ear – the hands and arms up to the elbows – a quarter of the head/hair is rubbed with a wet hand and finally the feet are washed up to the ankles. [The Shia only wipe the feet.]

  If one does not wash then the prayers are invalid. The four main rules have 14 more minor ones that are derived from the *Sunna*. Some of these are: clean one's teeth; wash out your nostrils (there is a saying in the Hadith that Satan takes up his abode in the nostrils); the beard must be combed with wet fingers; one must rub between the toes of both feet in a prescribed way.

  Muslims are confident their "little sins" will be forgiven after such ablutions duly followed by prayer. The list of "little" sins includes lying, deception, anger, lust etc. What are the great sins? They are murder, adultery, disobedience to parents, shirking jihad, usury, drunkenness, neglect of Friday prayer, neglect of Ramadan, practice of magic, gambling, dancing etc. There is only one sin that cannot be forgiven by the rules of ablution and prayer and that is '*shirk*' – the sin of associating a partner with God.

- ***Ghusl***: this is washing the entire body after some legal defilement. Not one hair should be left dry in the process.

- ***Tayammun***: this procedure is to be carried out if there is no water within about 2 miles. It is purification by sand or clean earth. One strikes the sand with one's open hands and then rubs them over the face and arms to the elbow.

After "washing" in one of these 3 ways, the Muslim can begin to recite the prescribed prayers. These may be said in private or in public, but prayers in a mosque are more meritorious. The person and his clothes must be clean and he must face the '*qibla*' or direction of prayer. There is a '*mithrab*' or niche in the rear wall of the mosque that indicates this direction – the geographic location of Mecca.

Prayer in a mosque is preceded by the '*adhan*' or the "call to prayer". This call is chanted in penetrating tones – these days through high-powered loudspeakers. The man who calls to prayer is called a muezzin. The sound goes out five times a day – at dawn, before sunrise (*fajr*), soon after midday (*Zuhr*), mid-afternoon (*'Asr*), soon after sunset (*Maghrib*) and after nightfall (*Isha*).

During the course of the prayer, certain postures have to be made by the worshipper in accordance to the rules laid down. The words of these prayers, which must be prayed in Arabic, are recitations from some passages in the Quran – the shorter ones near the end of the Quran as well as the Fatiha (sura 1). These are supplemented by words of praise to God. At intervals the worshipper says out loud, "God is great" (*Allahu Akbar*) and immediately bows himself down in a kneeling position until his forehead touches the ground. Each cycle of standing, bowing and prostration is known as a *ra'kah* and the number of *ra'kahs* varies between two and four according to the time of day.

At the end of the prayer, the worshipper raises his hands shoulder high with his palms upwards and offers a final prayer. He then draws his hands down over his face and on to his chest as if to convey the asked for blessing all over himself. In addition there are also "voluntary" prayers.

The Friday prayers (*Jum'a*) take the place of the customary midday prayer and are preceded by a sermon (*khutba*) delivered by the Imam.

3. Zakat – the poor tax/almsgiving – see sura 2: 43

- Each adult Muslim, if he/she is free and sane, is required to give alms if he/she possesses property as described in the law.

- Property for this purpose includes camels, bulls, cows, sheep, goats, horses, gold, silver, articles of merchandise, mines, the fruit of the earth – all according to a fixed scale of taxes. Household property, weapons and tools are not included.
- A person against whom there are debts equal to the value of his property does not have to pay tax.
- The taxation is designed to help the poor and a collector was duly appointed for this purpose. A person was free to distribute his own arms and the collector had to accept his word as truth. Most taxes seem to be collected on Fridays. This is also the time when beggars collect in the streets near mosques.
- The following people are entitled to receive zakat:
  - ✓ those whose property is below taxable value
  - ✓ those who have no property at all
  - ✓ collectors of *zakat*
  - ✓ slaves
  - ✓ debtors
  - ✓ people engaged in *da'wa* and *jihad*
  - ✓ travellers

  Zakat is usually given without compassion and received without gratitude.

4. Fasting (*saum*)

There are several Muslim fasts, but the really important one is during the month of Ramadan which is the 9th month of the Muslim calendar. This fast is obligatory for Muslims – see sura 2:163-185.

Based on a saying of Muhammad, Muslims believe that during Ramadan the gates of Paradise are open and the gates of hell are closed and that all who keep the fast will be pardoned all their past excusable sins.

There are number of rules that govern the fast:

- It cannot start until a Muslim is able to state that he has seen the new moon. This leads to frequent divergences of opinions for obviously there are different time zones. In the Arab World the beginning of the fast appears to depend to some extent on which country it owes its particular religious allegiance to – Saudi Arabia or Egypt. Sometimes there is a 24-hour difference between the two.
- The fast must be kept by young people from the age of 12 (some say 10). Some people are exempt from fasting – the sick, those with long-term illness and travellers on a journey of more than 3 days. But these are expected to make up the fast days missed as soon as they are able.
- The fast begins at dawn as soon as a white thread is distinguishable from a black thread and it continues until sunset. During this period not even one's own saliva should be swallowed.
- During the month of Ramadan you must make an additional 20 *ra'kahs* after the night prayer. These are called "*tarawih*" meaning "rest" because the congregation in the mosque sits down and rests after every fourth *rak'ah*.
- Ramadan lasts 30 days – i.e. the whole month.
- After sunset and until dawn a Muslim can eat as much as he likes and can indulge in any lawful pleasure. During Ramadan, it is a common sight in the Arab World to see a group of

men sitting together each with a bottle of water and a few dates in front of them waiting as the sun goes down signalling the end of that day's fast.

5. The Pilgrimage (*Hajj*)

The Pilgrimage to Mecca is obligatory for every Muslim once in his lifetime if he is an adult, sane, healthy and has enough money to provide for his journey as well as support his family while he is away – see sura 22:27-33.

A person who has completed the pilgrimage gains the title of '*Hajji*'. The dying of the hair and/or beard with henna is often a sign that a person has been on the *Hajj*.

- **The duties of the pilgrim**

There are 3 actions in the pilgrimage that are obligatory and are thought to be instituted by God:

- ✓ To wear no other garment but the "*ihram*" consisting of two seamless white wrappers each 6 ft. long and 3½ ft. wide. One is thrown over the back exposing the right arm and shoulder and is knotted on the right side. The other is wrapped around the lower body from the waist to the knees and knotted in the middle (for males only).
- ✓ To stand on the mountain of Arafat.
- ✓ To make a circuit around the Kaa'ba seven times – called the "*tawaf*".

Then there are five other duties that are said to be obligatory, but the omission of them does not constitute an unpardonable sin.

- ✓ To spend the night between the 9th and 10th Dhu al Hijja at Muzdalifa – a place halfway between Mina and Arafat
- ✓ To run the distance between the mountains of As Safa and Al Mara (now both in the 'holy mosque' in Mecca).
- ✓ To perform the "*Rama ar Rujam*" – or the throwing of stones at the pillar representing Satan.
- ✓ To make an extra circuit around the Kaa'ba if the pilgrim is not from Mecca.
- ✓ To shave the head (men only) after the pilgrimage is over.

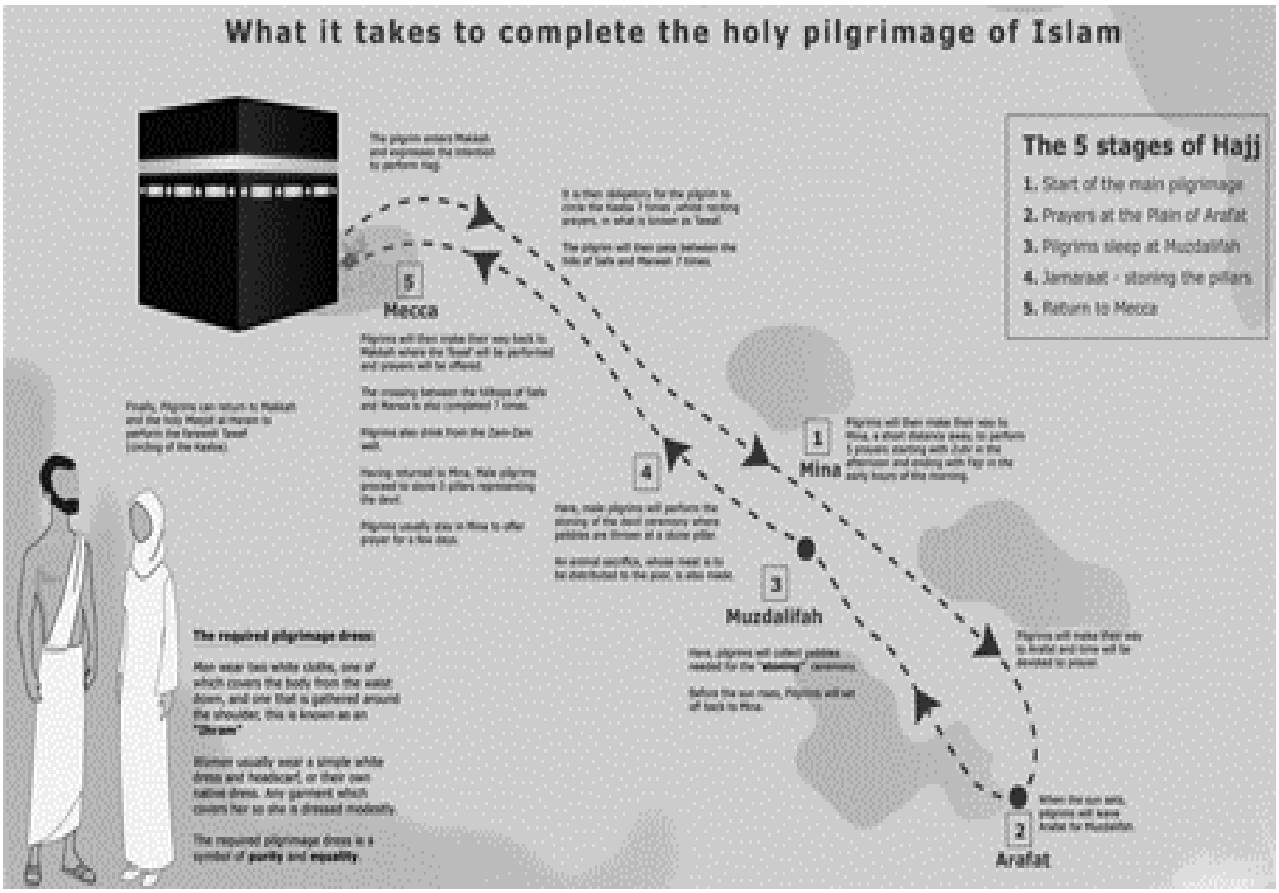
A tradition attributed to Muhammad is: "He who makes the pilgrimage for God's sake and does not talk loosely, nor act wickedly, shall return as pure from sin as the day he was born" and "Truly the pilgrimage puts away poverty and sin like the fires of a forge remove the dross".

- **What should happen in practice on the pilgrimage**

- ✓ Near Mecca the pilgrim bathes himself, performs two *ra'kahs* and then changes his clothes for the "*ihram*". He must keep his head uncovered. He is not to shave, cut his nails, or wear anything other than the "*ihram*". Sandals are allowed but not shoes.
- ✓ When he arrives in Mecca he washes himself in the holy mosque and then kisses the black stone (if he can get close enough).
- ✓ He must then circle the Kaa'ba seven times – three times quickly and a fourth time slowly, kissing the black stone each time he passes it (in theory – in practice this is impossible).
- ✓ He then proceeds to the place of Abraham (*maqamo Ibrahim*) where he recites from sura 2:125, *"And when we made the house a resort for men and a place of security. And take ye the place of Abraham for a place of prayer. And we enjoined Abraham and Ishmael saying, 'Purify my house for those who visit it and those who abide in it,*

for devotion and those who bow down and those who prostrate themselves.' "
He also performs two *ra'kah* prayers.

- ✓ He goes to the "hill" of As Safa reciting sura 2:153.
- ✓ At the 'top' of As Safa he faces the Kaa'ba and recites the creed and other quotations.
- ✓ He then runs between Mt. As Safa and Mt. Ak Marwa 7 times repeating the above prayers on the 'top' of each hill. This is a re-enactment of Hagar running between the 2 hills looking for water as Ishmael was dying of thirst (see Genesis 16:7-14 and 21:14-21). The water/well that she found is supposed to be Zem Zem – a spring very close to the Kaa'ba.
- ✓ All of the above takes place on the sixth day of the Hajj and in the evening he does another circuit of the Kaa'ba once.
- ✓ On the seventh day he listens to a sermon in the mosque and on the eighth day goes to Mina and spends the night there.
- ✓ The tenth day is Eid Al Adha (the Feast of Sacrifice) which is celebrated throughout the Muslim World. On this day the pilgrims gather stones from Al Muzadalifah, return to Mina where they cast seven stones at each of the three pillars the largest of which is called the 'great devil'. They then go to the other end of the valley of Mina and ritually kill a sheep or a goat.
- ✓ The pilgrimage has now been completed and the new Hajji can shave, cut his nails and put on his ordinary clothes. He is now an honoured "Al Hajji". You can watch video clips of the Hajj on YouTube.



A Sixth Pillar – *Jihad*

Some Muslims, in particular the very small sect of the Khariji, regard *jihad* as the sixth pillar of Islam.

Holy war is a duty in general on all male, free, adult Muslims, sane in mind and body and having the means enough to reach a Muslim army. This is a duty that is incumbent on all Muslims until the whole world is Islamized.

There are some conditions. Jihad must be led by a Khalif or an Imam and this means that since Shia believe their Imam to be invisible now, they cannot have *jihad* until he reappears.

Jihad is regarded as a God-given institution and its purpose is to advance Islam and repel evil from Muslims. If any part of the Muslim World is attacked by infidels, the Imam/Khalif may summon all Muslims to his aid from the whole Muslim World depending upon the danger imposed by the invading army.

The non-believers against whom the *jihad* is directed are to be invited to accept Islam. Those who accept will be given full citizenship rights of the Muslim country. Those who refuse become *Dhimmis* and will be made to pay *Jizya*. Those that refuse to become Muslims and refuse to pay taxes will have their families and land taken from them and be enslaved.

Muslims who die fighting in *jihad* are assured a place in Paradise and many special privileges there. This is an incitement to join a *jihad*.

As can be seen, there is a dualism within Islam. What is it? A political ideology of world domination? A religion of peace so you may have a meaningful way of worshipping God? Is a moderate Muslim a real Muslim?

This reminds me of the old arguments about light. Is light a particle or is it a wave? The arguments went back and forth for many decades. Then Quantum Mechanics was developed and it was clear that light is dualistic. It is both a wave and a particle at the same time and it depends upon the circumstances as to which quality it manifests.

For example

There appear to be two Qurans – the Quran of Mecca (early) and the Quran of Medina. Both are "perfect" since they come from God. Why then is there a theory of abrogation? Check the Quran of Mecca – sura 73:10, *"Listen to what they say* (the unbelievers) *with patience, and leave them with dignity."* Compare this with the Quran of Medina sura 8:12, *"I will be with you. Give strength to the believers. I will send terror into the unbelievers' hearts, cut off their heads …."*

So in Islam can two things be true and completely contradict each other? One of the results of this is that a simple right answer does not exist. For example: what is *jihad*? It is both a personal spiritual struggle against our tendencies to sin and it is a 100% all-out war against unbelievers. If you look at the Hadith (Bukhari) 97% of references to *jihad* are about war. Only about 3% are about inner struggle.

So avoid arguments with Muslims. Understand the duality and know that you will get the answer that at that time is considered the most expedient.

In most non-Muslim countries there is a profound ignorance of the totality of Islam. People study Islamic art, architecture, poetry, Sufism and history (which usually ignores the suffering of the innocent unbelievers). Graduates read the Quran and the Hadith. Why do we find Islamics difficult? Why is there so much fear of Islam?

Islam is one of the very few religions that have no version of "the golden rule". There is no such thing as humanity – only duality of believer and unbeliever. This distorts their ethics. A Muslim

should not lie, cheat, steal, kill another Muslim, but a Muslim is quite free to lie, deceive or kill an unbeliever if it advances Islam.

As followers of the Lord Jesus, we also fail to obey the golden rule, but we are judged and condemned on its basis. We fall short, but we maintain the ideal. For Muslims, they may be "friendly" to unbelievers, but never be an actual friend.