

## ***Spread of Islam:***

The initial growth of Islam was through relocation when Mohammed was persecuted in Mecca and forced to flee to Medina. There were few cities in Arabia so Islam first spread through villages. By Mohammed's death most of the persecution had stopped.

**Phase I—Initially by conquest (*Hierarchical diffusion*):** Muslims conquered land in the Middle East and Africa in the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> centuries (632-750 AD). This was the time of the four caliphs: Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman, Ali. Umar (Mohammed's 2<sup>nd</sup> successor) took the area north to Jerusalem, Damascus, Syria, and North Africa. During conquest people were given three options: convert, pay heavy taxes, or die. Many in Egypt and Syria were under oppressive rule so Islam became easy to accept. Islam was met with hostility, however, in Europe where Christianity was strong and less forceful. Charles Martel of the Franks stopped the progression of Islam into Europe at the Battle of Tours in 732 AD.

**Phase II—Trade (*contagious*):** The fact that Islam and its holy book the Quran focused on the Arab language was a benefit for trade. Trade helped to spread language, religion and culture. The Arab hearth center borders three continents—Asia, Africa, Europe, so it was central to all trade routes. Muslim merchants encouraged direct trade traveling the entire length of trade routes unlike their predecessors who used many intermediaries along the routes. As Islamic traders traveled trade routes their ideas (including religion) were “caught” (contagious) by those with whom they came into contact.

**Arabia/Africa:** Long established trade routes to the east (including the Silk Road) helped this spread. In the 9<sup>th</sup> century AD western African routes were controlled by the Berbers, Tuareg, and Soninke who eventually became Muslim. In east Africa Arab merchants married African clans and the Swahili developed. The development of the spice trade further encouraged contact with other lands.

**Southeast Asia:** Traders formed small communities in the region. They first came to the Malay peninsula from India and Arabia and then to Indonesia in the 13<sup>th</sup> century AD. Many in these areas converted to Islam because of the elevated political, social, and economic status of Muslims. They then helped natives resist Portuguese and Dutch domination in the 17<sup>th</sup> century AD.

**Central Asia/China:** Initial contact was through conquest of Iran and the Aral Sea area but by the 10<sup>th</sup> century trade is instrumental in the spread of Islam. By the 13<sup>th</sup> century AD many Mongols convert.

**Phase III—Migration (*relocation*):** Since 1500 AD Muslims from all over the eastern hemisphere moved to western Europe, Australia, parts of Africa, and the “New World”. Some reasons for migration included the break up of the Ottoman Empire, World War II, and the end of colonialism, bringing about the independence of much of the Muslim world. More recent events causing relocation include genocide in Iraq and Sudan and war.

### *Spread of Christianity*

Christianity is a monotheistic religion made up of people who are followers of Jesus Christ. Christians believe that Jesus Christ is the son of God and that he was the Messiah as prophesied in the Old Testament. Christianity shares its origin with Judaism. The Old Testament is a common text used by both Jewish and Christian believers; both are classified as Abrahamic religions.

The Christian calendar begins in **A.D. 1 (although our calendar is actually incorrect; therefore, Christ's birth is actually sometime between 6-4 BC)** with the birth of Jesus. Jesus' followers, who were called disciples, spread the teachings of Jesus across the Roman world and beyond. Christianity spread from Jerusalem into parts of Syria, Turkey, Greece, and Rome by the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> century because of the work of missionaries such as the Apostle Paul. The spread particularly affected cities around the Mediterranean Sea. Some of these major cities included Antioch, Ephesus, and Alexandria. The diffusion of Christianity was also help by the universality of the Greek language which was the language of the New Testament.

Until around A.D. 300, Christians were persecuted in the Roman Empire, and yet, Christianity continued to grow as Christians provided hope for the people oppressed by Rome and social support such as hospitals and charity. The testimony of persecuted martyrs also provided a seed of growth. Then Constantine the Great proclaimed that Christianity was a lawful religion with the Edict of Milan in A.D. 313, and at this point Christians were no longer widely persecuted. Christianity then spread into other cities, as well as the rural areas in the interior of Europe and Asia especially after the Emperor Theodosius made Christianity the official religion of the Roman Empire in A.D. 380.

The development of the Roman Catholic Church in the early Middle Ages played a key role in the growth of Christianity throughout Europe. The spread of Christianity was primarily achieved through the work of individuals and missions. Missionaries built churches, schools and hospitals to aid in Christian work. A secondary example of how Christianity spread is due to the Christian Church sharing its power with the rulers of many nations; therefore, when empires expanded so did the teachings of Christianity. For some medieval rulers, as with Islam, the conquered were given the difficult choice of "convert or die". As Christians traveled and traded throughout Europe and the East (particularly after the Crusades) they took their culture and religion with them aiding the spread of Christianity.

European colonialism during the 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup>, and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries also helped to diffuse the teachings of Christianity as many European countries operated under the motto of "God, Gold, and Glory." Christianity was brought to the colonies by settlers and missionaries who shared the message of their faith with native peoples. (This concept is particularly relevant for Latin America) Missionary work is still prevalent among the Christian church in many parts of Asia and Africa today.