



THE ISLAMIC FAITH

A SIMPLIFIED PRESENTATION

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العقيدة الميسرة

من الكتاب العزيز والسنة المطهرة

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the Name of Allah,
the Lord of Grace,
the Ever-Merciful

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Preface

All praise be to Allah who has made our faith complete and perfected the grace He always bestows on us. Peace and blessings be to Prophet Muhammad ibn Abdullah whom Allah sent as bearer of glad tidings and a warner, giving him the role of one who calls people to Allah by His leave and a light-giving beacon.

Guidance is the greatest blessing Allah, the Lord of all the worlds, bestows on anyone, and the most important guidance He grants is the one that shows the right faith, which is the only one Allah accepts from His servants. That is Islam, which means submission to Him. Allah Almighty has commanded His servants to request Him for guidance in every unit of their prayers, saying: ‘Guide us along the right path’.

In his infinite wisdom, Allah let Muslims differ for a variety of reasons, some differences are the result of ignorance while others are due to following one’s own desire. The Prophet (peace be upon him) foretold of such differences among Muslims. He said: ‘The Jews split into seventy-one different groups: one of these will be in heaven and seventy in hell. The Christians split into seventy-two groups: seventy-one of which will be in hell and one in heaven. By Him who holds Muhammad’s soul in His hand, my nation will split into seventy-three groups; only one of which will be in heaven and seventy-two in hell’. He was asked: ‘Messenger of Allah, who are these?’ He said: ‘The group.’ (Abu Dawud, 4597).

The fact that such differences in faith may exist makes it a bidding duty of every Muslim who is keen to follow the truth to look for the path followed by the Prophet (peace be upon him) and his companions. It is a path of knowledge and action. Every Muslim should follow their example.

The work we present you today is a brief book in which the author has tried to present what the Prophet and his companions followed in the most important area of religion, which is ‘beliefs’. He describes the deviant beliefs that are contrary to the Islamic faith, so that you will be well aware of what is right.

We pray to Allah to grant rich reward to the author, and also to reward everyone who has contributed to this work, in translation, design, publication and follow-up. May He benefit with it every one of our Muslim brethren who reads it. All praise be to Allah Who blesses all good efforts.



Introduction

All praise be to Allah: we praise Him, seek His help and pray for His forgiveness of our sins and misdeeds. Whomever Allah guides shall never go astray and whomever He leaves astray cannot find guidance.

I bear witness that there is no deity other than Allah, the One who has no partners and Who says: “It is He Who has sent among the unlettered a Messenger from themselves reciting to them His verses and purifying them and teaching them the Book and the Wisdom - although they were before in clear error.” (62: 2). I also bear witness that Muhammad is Allah’s servant and messenger, with whose message Allah has favoured mankind. He says: “Certainly did Allah confer [great] favor upon the believers when He sent among them a Messenger from themselves, reciting to them His verses and purifying them and teaching them the Book and the Wisdom, although they had been before in manifest error.” (3: 164).

Allah, the Sublime, sent His messenger, Muhammad (peace be upon him), with guidance and the true faith, so that he may bring people out of darkness into the light and out of manifest error into perfect guidance that ensures the comfort and reassurance of human hearts. “Guidance” is useful knowledge and “true faith” means good deeds. These two are the cornerstones of having a good life.

In His sublime book, the Qur’an, Allah included all that people may need with regard to their faith, worship, transactions, manners and morality. For what the Qur’an states in general or equivocal terms, the Sunnah provides explanation and detail. The Prophet says: ‘I have been given the Book together with something like it’.¹

The Islamic faith represents the essence of the religion of Islam, and gives it strength that enables it to prevail over all religions. It contains unique characteristics, which include:

- a. Belief in Allah’s oneness, addressing worship to Him alone and follow the practice of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him).
- b. Its divine source: Derived from the Qur’an and the hadith only, Islam does not refer to anyone’s view or to any analogy.

¹ Related by Abu Dawud, 4604.

- c. It is in perfect harmony with sound human nature that Allah has planted in mankind, before the interference from devils.
- d. It is consistent with sound human logic that is not subject to doubt or desire.
- e. It is comprehensive and addresses all essential aspects of life, mankind and the universe.
- f. It is complete, with parts that confirm one another; and is free of contradiction.
- g. It pursues a well balanced approach to all aspects of life.

These important features of the Islamic faith have yielded the following results:

- a. It has made submission purely to Allah, the Lord of all the worlds.
- b. Muslims follow Allah's messenger and reject all deviation and its promoters.
- c. It achieves perfect happiness and reassurance as a result of the bond between man and Allah, the All-Wise Creator.
- d. It supplies clear and rational conviction that is free of all contradiction and superstition.
- e. It provides for man's physical and spiritual needs and achieves complementarity between belief and behaviour.

Muslim scholars have always attached great importance to the Islamic faith, have taught it to people and produced a broad variety of works on the subject. Some are concise and others provide detailed explanations and commentaries. Scholars and their works explain what the early Muslims believed, and at times elucidated a particular question or refuted the arguments of deviant creeds and erroneous beliefs.

I have chosen to arrange the questions of belief according to the order in which the Prophet mentioned the six essential Islamic beliefs, as outlined in the *hadith* narrating his conversation with the angel Gabriel. I rely only on the two revealed sources: the Qur'an and the Sunnah. I have included the details of every essential principle and I finish each with a brief mention of those who err in this aspect, outlining their errors and the counter argument, without going too deeply into this.

This is, then, a medium-length book which combines clarity with simplicity to enable individual readers to make the best of it and learn the faith as accepted by the early generations, in simple language and proper order. I have chosen the title: *The Islamic Faith: A Simplified Presentation*.

I pray to Allah to make this effort acceptable to Him and useful to His servants. May He grant peace and blessings to Prophet Muhammad, members of his household and all his companions.

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The Islamic Faith: A Simplified Presentation

*T*he essence of the Islamic faith is the belief in Allah, His angels, His books, His messengers, the Last Day and divine decree: good and bad. Allah says in the Qur'an: "Truly righteous is he who believes in Allah, the Last Day, the angels, the Book, and the Prophets." (2: 177). "Believers! Do believe in Allah and His Messenger, and in the Book which He has bestowed from on high upon His Messenger, and in the Book which He sent down in earlier times. Anyone who denies Allah, His angels, His revealed books, His messengers, and the Last Day has indeed gone far astray." (4: 136). "We have created everything in due measure." (54: 49).

Answering Gabriel's question about faith, the Prophet said: 'It is to believe in Allah, His angels, His books, His messengers, and the Last Day, and to believe in divine decree, both the good and the evil of it'.²

Belief in Allah

*B*elief in Allah means to be absolutely certain of Allah's existence and that He is the Lord of all things; who alone deserves to be worshipped, and no one else; who combines all attributes of perfection; and who is free of all attributes of imperfection. Belief in Allah includes four points:

One: Belief in His existence

That Allah exists is an absolute truth: 'Thus it is, because Allah alone is the Ultimate Truth, and all that people invoke beside Him is sheer falsehood, and because Allah alone is the One Most High, Great.' (22: 62). Their messengers said, "Can there be doubt about Allah, Creator of the heavens and earth? He invites you that He may forgive you of your sins, and He delays your death for a specified term." (14: 10). To deny Allah's existence is an act of arrogance, injustice and disbelief: "[Moses] said, 'You have already known that none has sent down these [signs] except the Lord of the heavens and earth as evidence, and indeed I think, O Pharaoh, that you are utterly lost.'" (17: 102).

² Related by Muslim, 8.

‘Pharaoh said: “And what is that Lord of all the worlds”? [Moses] answered: “He is the Lord of the heavens and earth and all that is between them, if you want to be sure”. [Pharaoh] said to those around him: “Do you hear”? [Moses] said: “He is your Lord as well as the Lord of your forefathers of old.” [Pharaoh] said: “For certain, the messenger who has been sent to you is indeed a madman”. [Moses] went on: “He is indeed the Lord of the east and the west and of all that is between them, if you would but use your reason”. [Pharaoh] said: “If you ever serve a Allah other than me, I will most certainly have you imprisoned.” (26: 23–29).

Several matters prove Allah’s existence, including:

1. Sound human nature:

This refers to what human nature is like without being subjected to any previous learning. Allah says: ‘Set your face steadily towards the true faith, turning away from all that is false, in accordance with the natural disposition which Allah has installed into man. Nothing can change Allah’s creation. Such is the ever-true faith; but most people do not know it.’ (30: 30). The Prophet says: ‘Every child is born with sound human nature, but his parents make him a Jew, a Christian or a Magian’.³ Another version related by Muslim quotes the Prophet as saying: ‘Every single child is born with the right faith’. Other versions related by Muslim say: ‘Every single child is born with the right faith, until its tongue tells of it’. ‘Every single child is born with this sound nature, until its tongue expresses its thoughts’.⁴

Thus, unless its nature comes under a corrupting influence, every creature that retains its original nature will find within itself the belief in Allah’s existence. In a sacred *hadith*, Allah is quoted: ‘I have created all My servants on the pure faith, but devils came and diverted them away from their faith.’⁵

Human nature may be subjected to a variety of misunderstandings and desires, but it always reappears in its true form at times of hardship and difficulty. Allah says: ‘When they embark on a ship, they call to Allah, sincere in their faith in Him alone; but as soon as He has brought them safely ashore, they begin to associate partners with Him.’ (29: 65). And says, ‘He it is who enables you to travel on land and sea.

3 Related by al-Bukhari, 1358; Muslim, 2658.

4 Related by Muslim, 2658.

5 Related by Muslim in a long *hadith*, 2865.

Then when you are on board ships, and sailing along in a favourable wind, they feel happy with it, a stormy wind comes upon them and waves surge towards them from all sides, so that they believe they are encompassed [by death]. [At that point] they appeal to Allah, in complete sincerity of faith in Him alone: ‘If You will save us from this, we shall certainly be most grateful.’ Yet when He has saved them, they transgress in the land, offending against all right. Mankind, it is against your own souls that your offences rebound. [You care only for] the enjoyment of this present life, but in the end you will return to Us when We will tell you the truth of what you were doing [in this life].’ (10: 22-3).

2. Sound reason:

This refers to the human mind when it is free of doubts and desires. In such a state, the human mind firmly concludes that all beings must have a Creator and that they could neither have just come into existence by chance, nor could they have brought themselves into existence. Non-existence cannot produce existence. There must be a Creator who brings the living into existence. This Creator is Allah, limitless is He in His glory.

When he arrived in Madinah to request the release of some of his relatives who were taken captive in the Battle of Badr, Jubayr ibn Mut’im was still an idolater. The Prophet was leading the Maghrib prayer as Jubayr entered and he heard the Prophet reciting: ‘Were they created out of nothing? Were they the creators? Did they create the heavens and earth? No. They have no faith. Do they possess your Lord’s treasures? Or are they in ultimate control?’ (52: 35–37). Jubayr said: ‘I felt as if my heart was flying away’⁶ and this was the first time he began to think about Islam.

In pre-Islamic days, Qass ibn Sa‘idah al-Iyadi, an Arabian orator, used sound reasoning to tell of Allah’s existence. He said: ‘A camel’s droppings indicate a camel, and footmarks indicate that someone has traversed the area. What about the sky and its constellations, and earth and its hills and valleys: do they not point to the Great Maker?’

3. The world around us:

Allah says: ‘We shall show them Our signs in the wide horizons [of the universe]

⁶ Related by al-Bukhari, 3050, 4023 and 4854.

and within themselves, so that it will become clear to them that this [revelation] is indeed the truth.’ (41: 53). This provides different methods such as the miracles given to prophets, the signs Allah shows at the hands of pious people and the answer to people’s prayers and supplication. In reference to Prophet Noah, Allah says: ‘Therefore, he called out to his Lord: “I am overcome. Grant me help!” So We opened the gates of heaven with water pouring down in torrents, and caused the earth to burst forth with springs. Thus the waters met for a preordained purpose. We carried him in a vessel made of planks and nails which floated under Our eyes: a reward for him who had been rejected.’ (54: 10–14). ‘And We revealed to Moses: “Strike the sea with your staff.” So it divided, and each part was like a massive mountain. And We caused the others to draw near, and We saved Moses and all who were with him, while We caused the others to drown. Indeed, there is in this a sure sign; yet most of them will not believe.’ (26: 63–67). In reference to Prophet Jesus, Allah says: ‘[Allah] will make him a messenger to the Israelites. “I have brought you a sign from your Lord. I will fashion for you out of clay the likeness of a bird. I shall breathe into it and, by Allah’s leave, it shall become a living bird. I will heal the blind and the leper, and bring the dead back to life by Allah’s leave. I will announce to you what you eat and what you store up in your houses. Surely, in all this there is a sign for you, if you are truly believers.’” (3: 49).

Similar things occurred to Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). Anas ibn Malik reports that one Friday, as ‘Allah’s messenger (peace be upon him) was on the platform delivering the Friday speech, a man came into the mosque through a door facing the Repayment House⁷. He stood facing the Prophet, then said: “Messenger of Allah, our properties are ruined and we cannot find a way. Pray to Allah to send us rain”. The Prophet lifted his hands and said: “Our Lord, send us rain. Our Lord, send us rain. Our Lord, send us rain”. By Allah, we could see no clouds in the sky, not a single one. There was neither house nor structure between us and Mount Sal’. Shortly afterwards, a thick round cloud appeared from behind it and when it was in the middle of the sky it spread and then there was rainfall. By Allah, we never saw the sun for a week. Then a man came through that door on the following Friday, when Allah’s messenger was on the platform giving the Friday speech. He stood

⁷ This is a house belonging to Umar ibn al-Khattab that he had to sell during his reign as Caliph in order to repay a debt he owed. It later came to be known as ‘the Repayment House’.

facing him and said: “Messenger of Allah, our property is ruined and our measures are ineffective. Pray to Allah to withhold [the rain] from us”. The Prophet lifted his hands and said: “Our Lord, make it around us, not over us. Our Lord, make it fall on hills and knolls and over valleys and woods”. The rain stopped and we went outside and walked in the sun’.⁸

Allah says in a Qur’anic verse that applies to all: ‘Or, Who is it that responds to the one in distress when he calls out to Him, and Who removes evil, and makes you inherit the earth? Could there be any deity alongside Allah? Little do they reflect!’ (27: 62).

The miracles given to Allah’s messenger, the response to prayer and the relief Allah grants to those in distress are all tangible signs that have been witnessed by groups of people. They realised, with clear certainty, that the One who sent these messengers, answered prayers and relieved distress is Allah.

4. True revelation:

This is the Qur’an and the authentic Hadith. Allah says: ‘Will they not, then, try to understand the Qur’an? Had it issued from any but Allah, they would surely have found in it many an inner contradiction!’ (4: 82). ‘Mankind, a clear proof has now come to you from your Lord, and We have sent down to you a glorious light.’ (4: 174). ‘Mankind, there has come to you an admonition from your Lord, a cure for all that may be in your hearts, and guidance and grace for all believers.’ (10: 57). ‘Is it not enough for them that We have revealed to you this book which is being read out to them? Indeed there is in it much grace and a reminder to people who will believe.’ (29: 51). The Qur’an includes reports of matters that belong to the realm that is beyond the reach of human faculties of perception, yet are very true. It also includes explanation of true beliefs, as well as laws that ensure justice to all and advocates fine manners and good morality. All these confirm that it could not have emanated from anyone other than Allah nor have been produced by any creature.

Therefore, no human being has truly denied Allah’s existence. Rather, groups of disbelievers, old and new, have made alternative claims, such as:

⁸ Related by al-Bukhari, 1014; Muslim, 897.

a. Eternalists

These are philosophers who claimed that the universe is eternal, a philosophy similar to contemporary atheists. They are the ones to whom the Qur'an refers as: 'They say: "There is nothing beyond our life in this world. We die, we live, nothing but time destroys us". Of this they have no knowledge whatsoever. They merely guess.' (45: 24). They allege that the world has always been in existence, and will continue to exist, and that people are born, live and die. Thus, they place creatures in isolation from their Creator. Allah refutes their argument by stating: 'Of this they have no knowledge'. They certainly have no sure knowledge arrived at by clear logic, proper research, documentation, sense, or sound nature. It is all pure conjecture that has no basis: 'They merely guess'.

b. Believers in nature

These people allege that the universe exists naturally. Thus, plants, animals and inanimate objects existed by themselves and developed their own characteristics and movements by themselves. A simple argument refutes their claims: it is impossible for anything to be a creature and a creator at the same time. Allah says: 'Were they created out of nothing? Were they the creators?' (52: 35).

To them nature, which they claim has produced what exists, is no more than a variety of inanimate objects that have neither feelings nor senses. How can it produce species that hear, see, speak, feel and have senses? No one can give what one does not have.

c. Believers in coincidence

These people claim that different species came into existence by sheer coincidence. Atoms and particles came together by mere chance and without any prior planning this led to the emergence of life, which over time led to the multiplicity of species. Perhaps there is no need to comment on such claims, as simple reflection is enough to dismiss it. The fine tuning of creation, its perfect system, its continuity according to complex laws, and its perfect balance make the claim of coincidence baseless. Allah says: 'Such is the work of Allah Who has ordered all things to perfection'. (27: 88). 'It is Allah who has created seven heavens and a similar number of the earth. His command descends through them all, so that you may learn that Allah has power over all things, and that Allah encompasses all things with His knowledge.' (65: 12).

d. Marxists

These are the ones who allege: ‘There is no Allah. Life is matter’. When they managed to establish a powerful state, the Soviet Union, it was like a huge structure built on the edge of a precipice. Hence, it did not survive for long and was broken up into many states.

e. Individuals across history

The Qur’an provides some examples of these, such as Pharaoh who first appeared to deny Allah’s existence when he asked Moses: ‘And what is that Lord of all the worlds?’ (26: 23). Then he claimed himself to be the Lord of the universe, saying to his people: ‘I am your supreme Lord.’ (79: 24). He went further than that, claiming divinity for himself: ‘I know of no deity that you could have other than myself.’ (28: 38). He further added a warning to Moses: ‘If you ever serve a god other than me, I will most certainly have you imprisoned.’ (26: 29). Another such character was the Nimrod, who argued against Prophet Abraham about his Lord: ‘Abraham said, “My Lord gives life and causes death”. “I, too”, said [the Nimrod], “give life and cause death”. Abraham said, “Well, Allah causes the sun to rise in the east. Cause it, then, to rise in the west”. Thus the disbeliever was dumbfounded. Allah does not guide the wrongdoers.’ (2: 258).

All of the above-mentioned contradict themselves and deny their own nature. As Allah describes their condition: ‘Within their souls they knew [the Signs] to be true, yet they, in their wickedness and arrogance, rejected them. Consider, then, what happened in the end to the evildoers.’ (27: 14). Hence, they disappeared, leaving no trace.

Two: Belief in His Lordship

This means absolute conviction that Allah, the Exalted, is the only Lord, the Creator, the Sovereign, the Commander. The Arabic word *rabb*, which is translated as the Lord, means the Master, the Owner who holds all authority and who sustains all the worlds by what He bestows of favours and bounty. Allah says: ‘[Pharaoh] said: “Who, now, is this Lord of you two, Moses?” He replied: “Our Lord is He who gives everything its distinctive nature and form, and further guides them.”’ (20: 49–50). Allah’s Lordship is based on three main elements:

1. Creation

Allah is the Creator of everything and everything else is created. Allah says: ‘Allah is the Creator of everything, and of all things He is the Guardian.’ (39: 62). ‘It is He Who has created all things and ordained them in due proportions.’ (25: 2). When creation is attributed to anyone other than Allah, it is limited in its significance as it refers to shaping, forming or proportioning. It never refers to bringing something into existence out of nothing. The Qur’an also uses ‘creation’ in this sense, as Allah says: ‘Exalted be Allah, the best of creators.’ (23: 14).

2. Sovereignty

Allah is the Sovereign Who owns everything and everything else belongs to Him. Allah says: ‘Do you not know that Allah has sovereignty over the heavens and earth, and that apart from Allah you have no one to protect you or give you help?’ (2: 107). ‘To Allah belongs the dominion of the heavens and earth; and He has power over all things’. (3: 189). ‘Say: Lord, Sovereign of all dominion, You grant dominion to whom You will and take dominion away from whom You will.’ (3: 26). ‘Allah has no partner in His dominion.’ (17: 111). ‘Thus is Allah, your Lord: to Him belongs all dominion, while those whom you invoke instead of Him do not own even the skin of a date-stone.’ (35: 13). Whenever ownership or dominion is attributed to anyone else, it is relative, transitory and partial, as stated in these verses: ‘My people! Yours is the dominion today, having the upper hand in the land.’ (40: 29). ‘Those whom your right hands possess.’ (4: 3). Total ownership and absolute dominion belong to Allah alone, as He says: ‘We alone shall remain after the earth and all who live on it have passed away. To Us they shall all return.’ (19: 40).

3. Command

To Allah alone belongs the authority to command and everything else is subject to His command. He says: ‘Say: All power of decision rests with Allah.’ (3: 154). ‘Surely all creation and all authority belong to Him. Blessed is Allah, the Lord of the worlds.’ (7: 54). ‘The case will have been settled then. To Allah shall all things return.’ (2: 210). Allah says to the Prophet: ‘You, [Prophet], have no say in the matter.’ (3: 128). Needless to say, (having no say in the matter) is more applicable to everyone else other than the Prophet: ‘All power of decision belongs to Allah before and after.’ (30: 4). His is the supreme command over all His creation.

Whatever attribute of command is said to belong to others is merely relative and subject to His will, as stated in the following verse: ‘They, however, followed only Pharaoh’s bidding. Pharaoh’s bidding led by no means to what is right.’ (11: 97).

Allah’s command includes both what applies to the universe and to the law He wants people to implement. His universal command is certainly done, as it is synonymous with His will. He says: ‘When He intends something to be, He only says to it: “Be,” and it is.’ (36: 82). His law is synonymous with those whom wish to follow. It may or may not be fulfilled, but both situations are included in His will, as He says: ‘To those of you whose will is to be upright. Yet, you cannot will except by the will of Allah, Lord of all the worlds.’ (81: 28–29).

All other aspects of Allah’s Lordship come under these three main elements: creation, sovereignty and command. Thus included in these are the provision of sustenance, giving life, causing death, sending rain, growing vegetation, sending the winds, the sailing of ships, the succession of day and night, conception and pregnancy, childbirth, health, disease, exaltation or abasement, etc.

The belief in Allah’s Lordship is instilled in human nature, confirmed naturally by reasoning, felt in the universe and stated in divine revelation. This is clearly indicated in Allah’s book, the Qur’an:

“In the creation of the heavens and earth; in the alternation of night and day; in the vessels that sail through the sea with what is useful for mankind; in the water Allah sends down from the sky giving life to the earth after it had been lifeless, causing all manner of living creatures to multiply on it; in the movement of the winds, and the clouds that run their courses between sky and earth: in all this there are signs for people who use their reason.” (2: 164).

“You cause the night to pass into the day, and You cause the day to pass into the night. You bring forth the living from the dead, and You bring forth the dead from that which is alive. You grant sustenance to whom You will, beyond all reckoning.” (3: 27).

“It is Allah Who splits the grain and the fruit-stone. He brings forth the living out of that which is dead and the dead out of that which is alive. Such is Allah. How, then, are you deluded away from the truth? He is the One Who causes the day to break. He has made the night to be [a source of] stillness, and the sun and the moon

for reckoning. All this is laid down by the will of the Almighty, the All-Knowing. It is He Who has set up for you the stars, so that you may be guided by them in the deep darkness of land and sea. We have made Our revelations plain indeed to people who have knowledge. He it is Who has brought you all into being from a single soul and has given you a dwelling and a place of sojourn. We have made Our revelations plain indeed to people of understanding. And He it is Who sends down water from the sky with which We bring forth plants of every type and out of these We bring forth verdure from which We bring forth grain piled tight, packed on one another; and out of the spathe of the palm tree, dates in thick clusters; and gardens of vines; and the olive tree, and the pomegranate: all so alike, and yet so different. Behold their fruit when they come to fruition and ripen. Surely in these there are clear signs for people who truly believe.” (6: 95–99).

“It is Allah Who raised the heavens without any support that you could see, and established Himself on the Throne. And He it is Who has made the sun and the moon subservient [to His laws], each pursuing its course for a set term. He ordains all things. He makes plain His revelations so that you may firmly believe that you will certainly be meeting your Lord. It is He Who has spread out the earth and placed upon it firm mountains and rivers, and created on it two sexes of every type of fruit, and caused the night to cover the day. In all these there are signs for people who think. And there are on earth adjoining tracts of land; and vineyards; and fields of grains and date-palms, growing in clusters or non-clustered. [All] are irrigated by the same water; yet some of them are favoured above others with regard to the food [they provide]. In all this there are signs for people who use their reason.” (13: 2–4).

“He has created the heavens and earth in truth; sublimely exalted is He above anything people may associate with Him. He creates man out of a drop of sperm; yet this same man is openly contentious. He creates cattle which give you warmth and other benefits; and from them you obtain food. And you find beauty in them when you drive them home in the evening and when you take them out to pasture in the morning. And they carry your loads to distant lands, which you could not otherwise reach without much hardship to yourselves. Your Lord is certainly most compassionate, ever merciful. And [He creates] horses, mules and asses for you to ride or put on show. And He creates other things of which you have no

knowledge. It is Allah alone Who points to the right path. Yet many may swerve from it. Had He so willed, He would have guided you all aright. It is He Who sends down water from the skies. From it you drink, and with it grow the plants on which you pasture your cattle. And with it He causes crops to grow for you, and olive trees, and date-palms, and grapes, and all other kinds of fruit. Surely in this there is a sign for people who think. And He has made the night and the day and the sun and the moon to be subservient to you; and all the stars are subservient to His command. In this there are signs for people who use their reason. On earth He has fashioned for you objects of various hues; surely in this there is a sign for people who take heed. It is He Who has made the sea subservient to [His laws], so that you may eat fresh meat from it, and take from it gems which you may wear. You see the ships ploughing through the waves, so that you may be able to go forth in quest of His bounty, and that you may be grateful. He has placed firm mountains on earth lest it should sway with you; and rivers and paths so that you may find your way, as well as landmarks. By the stars, too, are people guided. Is He, then, Who creates like one that cannot create? Will you not think? Should you try to count Allah's blessings, you will never be able to compute them. Allah is indeed much forgiving, ever merciful." (16: 3-18).

"Indeed, We create man out of the essence of clay, then We place him, a gamete, in a safe place of rest. Then We create out of the gamete a clinging cell mass, and out of the clinging cell mass We create an embryo. Then We create within the embryo bones, then We clothe the bones with flesh. We then bring this into being as another creation. Exalted be Allah, the best of creators. And then, after all this, you are destined to die; and then, you shall be restored to life on the Day of Resurrection. We have created above you seven [celestial] orbits; and never are We unmindful of [Our] creation. We send down water from the skies in accordance with a set measure, and We cause it to lodge in the earth; and We are most certainly able to take it all away. And by means of this water We bring forth for you gardens of date-palms and vines, yielding abundant fruit, and from which you eat, as well as a tree that grows on Mount Sinai yielding oil and relish for all to eat. In the cattle too there is a lesson for you: We give you to drink of that which is in their bellies, and you gain many other benefits from them, and you eat of their flesh. By them, as by the ships you are carried." (23: 12–22).

“Are you not aware that it is Allah Who causes the clouds to move onwards, then joins them together, then piles them up in masses, until you can see rain come forth from their midst. He it is Who sends down from the skies mountainous masses charged with hail, striking with it whom He wills and averting it from whom He wills. The flash of His lightning well-nigh deprives people of their sight. It is Allah who causes night and day to alternate. In this too there is surely a lesson for all who have eyes to see. Allah has created every animal from water; and among them are such as creep on their bellies, and such as walk on two legs, and others yet on four. Allah creates what He wills. Surely Allah has power over all things.” (24: 43–45).

Do you not see how your Lord causes the shadow to lengthen when, had He so willed, He could have indeed made it stand still? But then We have made the sun its guide. And then, little by little, We draw it in towards Ourselves. He it is Who makes the night a garment for you, and sleep a repose. He makes every day a resurrection. And He it is Who sends forth the winds as heralds of His coming grace. And We cause pure water to descend from the skies, so that with it We may bring dead land to life and give drink to a countless number of Our creation, beasts as well as human. Many times have We explained this [in the] Qur’an to them, so that they may take it to heart, but most people refuse to be anything but disbelievers. Had We so willed, We could have sent a warner to every city. Do not obey the unbelievers, but strive most vigorously against them with this Qur’an. He it is Who has brought the two bodies of water to a meeting point; the one sweet and thirst-quenching, and the other salty and bitter. Yet between them He has made a barrier and a forbidding ban. And He it is Who has created man from water and established for him bonds of lineage and marriage. All-Powerful is your Lord.” (25: 45–54).

“So exalted is Allah’s limitless glory both in your evening hours and in your morning hours. To Him is due all praise in the heavens and earth, at twilight and at noon. He it is Who brings forth the living out of that which is dead, and brings forth the dead out of that which is alive, and gives life to the earth after it has been lifeless. Likewise shall you be raised to life. One of His signs is that He created you from dust; and, behold, you become human beings spreading far and wide. And among His signs is that He creates for you spouses out of your

own kind, so that you might incline towards them, and He engenders love and tenderness between you. In this there are clear signs indeed for people who think. And among His signs are the creation of the heavens and earth, and the diversity of your tongues and colours. In this there are clear signs indeed for those who are endowed with knowledge. And among His signs is your sleep, at night and in daytime, as well as your quest for some of His bounty. In this there are clear signs indeed for people who listen. And among His signs is that He displays before you the lightning, giving rise to both fear and hope, and sends down water from the skies, with which He gives life to the earth after it had been lifeless. In this there are clear signs indeed for people who use their reason. And among His signs is that the skies and the earth stand firm at His behest. Then, in the end, when with one call He summons you from the earth, you will all rise. To Him belongs all those in the heavens and earth: all devoutly obey Him. It is He Who creates [life] in the first instance, and then brings it forth anew; and most easy is this for Him. His is the most sublime attribute in the heavens and earth. He is the Almighty, the Wise.” (30: 17–27).

“[It is] the Lord of grace Who has taught the Qur’an. He created man and taught him to articulate [thought and speech]. The sun and the moon function in due measure. The stars and the trees prostrate themselves [before Him]. He has raised the skies high, and has set the balance, so that you may not exceed the balance. Weigh, therefore, with justice and do not fall short in the balance. He has laid out the earth for His creatures, with all its fruits, its palm trees with sheathed clusters, its husked grain and its sweet-smelling plants. Which, then, of your Lord’s blessings do you both deny? He created man from dried clay, like pottery, and created the jinn from raging flames of fire. Which, then, of your Lord’s blessings do you both deny? He is the Lord of the two risings and the Lord of the two settings. Which, then, of your Lord’s blessings do you both deny? He has given freedom to the two great bodies of water, so that they may meet; yet between them is a barrier which they do not cross. Which, then, of your Lord’s blessings do you both deny? Pearls and corals come from both. Which, then, of your Lord’s blessings do you both deny? His are the lofty ships that sail like floating mountains through the seas. Which, then, of your Lord’s blessings do you both deny?” (55: 1–25).

“About what are they asking? About the fateful tiding on which they dispute. No indeed; they shall certainly know! Again, no indeed; they shall certainly know! Have We not spread and levelled the earth, and made the mountains as pegs? We created you in pairs, and made your sleep a cessation of activity. We made the night a mantle.” (78: 1–10).

“Are you a more difficult creation or is the heaven? Allah constructed it. He raised it high and gave it its perfect shape, and gave darkness to its night, and brought out its daylight. After that He spread out the earth. He brought out water from it and brought forth its pastures; and the mountains He set firm, for you and your cattle to delight in.” (79: 27–33).

“Let man reflect on the food he eats: how We pour down the rain in torrents, then cleave the earth in fissures; how We bring forth the grains, the grapes, and the fresh vegetation, the olive and the palm, the dense-treed gardens, the fruit-trees and the green pastures, for you and your cattle to delight in.” (80: 24–32).

Generally speaking, people do acknowledge Allah’s Lordship and that He is the Creator, the Sovereign who conducts all affairs. Even the Arab idolaters of old acknowledged this and Allah mentions this in different places in the Qur’an: ‘Say: “To whom belongs the earth and all that lives therein? [Tell me] if you know”. They will reply: “To Allah”. Say: “Will you not, then, reflect?” Say: “Who is the Lord of the seven heavens, and the Lord of the Supreme Throne?” They will reply: “[They all belong] to Allah”. Say: “Will you not, then, fear Him?” Say: “In whose hand rests the sovereignty of all things, protecting all, while against Him there is no protection? [Tell me] if you know”. They will reply: “[They all belong] to Allah”. Say: “How, then, can you be so deluded?”’ (23: 84–89). ‘Yet if you ask them: “Who created the heavens and the earth?” they are sure to answer, “The Almighty, the All-Knowing created them.” (43: 9).

However, various groups and communities strayed from this acknowledgement, ascribing the Lordship to others besides Allah. Among these were:

- a. Zoroastrians, who allege that that the universe has two creators: the deity of light who creates goodness and the deity of darkness who creates evil. They agree that light is better than darkness, but they differ in their views on whether darkness has always existed or was created at some point.

- b. Christians, who believe in the Trinity. They allege that the one Allah is in three persons: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. However, they do not claim that there are three separate Lords of the universe. They confirm that there is only one Creator.
- c. The Arab idolaters of old. They believed that their idols were able to cause benefit or harm and had a role in conducting affairs. They also had some practices that attributed a share of Lordship to other beings.
- d. The negators. These alleged that everyone creates their own deeds independently from Allah.

All these errant beliefs are refuted by sound human nature, logic, sense and divine revelations that confirm that Allah alone is the Creator; the Sovereign Who has the sole authority to command. He says: ‘Never did Allah take to Himself any offspring, nor has there ever been any deity alongside Him. Had there been any, each deity would surely have taken away his own creation, and they would surely have tried to establish superiority over one another. Limitless in His glory is Allah, far above all that which they attribute to Him’. (23: 91). The true Allah must be a Creator who does what He wills. Had He a partner, that partner would have also created and done things. In such a situation, there are only two possibilities:

- a. Each deity would take away his own creation so that each would exercise his independence. This possibility is discounted in view of the consistency that prevails in the universe.
- b. The two deities would be in rivalry and each would try to establish his superiority. Suppose that one of them wants to move a creature or bring it to life while the other wants to leave it motionless or cause its death. Either both wills will be done, or one of them, or neither. The first and third possibilities cannot take place, because they involve a combination of two things that negate each other. Only the second possibility can then take place. The one whose will is done will be superior and in command, while the other does not qualify as a Lord. We are then back to the starting point of there being only one Lord who combines creation, sovereignty and command all at the same time.

Three: Belief in His Divinity

This means absolute conviction that Allah alone is the only true Allah who deserves to be worshipped. The Arabic word *ilah* means ‘the one to be worshipped’.

In other words, He is the one to whom hearts turn in pure love and complete submission. The essence of worship is a combination of complete love and complete humility, in submission to the One who is worshipped. This can only be due to the One Allah. This belief is endorsed by the greatest testimony made by the greatest witness on the greatest issue. Allah says: ‘Allah Himself bears witness, and so do the angels and men of knowledge, that there is no deity other than Him, the executor of Justice. There is no deity save Him, the Almighty, the Wise.’ (3: 18). ‘Your Allah is the One Allah: there is no deity but He, the Lord of grace, the Ever-Merciful’. (2: 163).

Allah created all His creatures, including humans and jinn, to worship Him alone, although He has no need of them or what they may offer. He says: ‘I have not created the jinn and mankind to any end other than that they may worship Me. No sustenance do I require of them, nor do I require that they should feed Me.’ (51: 56–57). He sent all of His messengers to mankind in order to establish this faith, so that people address all of their worship to Allah alone and to discard all else. He says: ‘Indeed, We have raised a messenger in every community, [who said to them]: “Worship Allah and shun the devil.”’ (16: 36). All messengers made this clear to their people, with every single one of them saying: ‘My people, worship Allah alone. You have no deity other than Him.’ (7: 59, 65, 73 and 85). Allah says: ‘Before your time We never sent a messenger without having revealed to him that there is no deity other than Me. Therefore, you shall worship Me alone.’ (21: 25).

To attain this type of faith, all kinds of worship must be addressed to Allah alone. Whoever addresses any aspect of worship to any other than Allah is an idolater and a disbeliever. Worship is of different kinds:

- a. Worship through the heart, including love, fear and hope. The first is referred to by the Qur’anic verse: ‘Yet there are people who worship beings other than Allah, giving them a status equal to His, loving them as Allah alone should be loved; whereas the believers love Allah more than all else.’ (2: 165). On fear, Allah says: ‘It is but Satan who prompts people to fear his allies: so, have no fear of them but fear Me if you are truly believers.’ (3: 175). Concerning hope, He says: ‘Say: “I am but a human being like yourselves. It has been revealed to me that your Allah is the One and only Allah. Hence, whoever expects to meet his Lord [on Judgment Day], let him do what is right, and in the worship due to

his Lord admit no one as partner.” (18: 110). These three types of worship fall under worship through the heart. Allah says: ‘Those whom they invoke strive to obtain their Lord’s favour, vying with each other to be near Him. They hope for His grace and dread His punishment.’ (17: 57). However, all three must be combined and it is not acceptable that any one of them is upheld to the exclusion of the others. To worship Allah only by fear, hope or love is to fall short of true worship. It is only he who worships Allah with love, fear and hope all together who is a true believer in Allah and His oneness.

When a person is in through heart and logic on the right track, his entire being is in a healthy condition, as confirmed by the *hadith*: ‘Truly, in everyone’s body there is a morsel of flesh which, if it be whole, all the body is whole and if it be diseased, all the body is diseased. It is indeed the heart’.⁹

- b. Verbal worship, such as supplication, seeking refuge with Allah, seeking His urgent help, Allah’s glorification, Qur’anic recitation and all types of good words. On supplication, Allah says: ‘Places of worship are for Allah alone; therefore, do not invoke anyone other than Allah.’ (71: 18). On seeking refuge, He says: ‘Say: “I seek refuge in the Lord of the Daybreak.”’ (113: 1). ‘Say: “I seek refuge in the Lord of mankind.”’ (114: 1). On seeking urgent help, Allah says: ‘When you implored your Lord for help, He answered.’ (8: 9). On glorifying Allah, He says: ‘Believers! Remember Allah always, and glorify him morning and evening.’ (33: 41–42). On reciting the Qur’an, He says: ‘Recite what has been revealed to you of the Book.’ (29: 45). And on good words, He tells us: ‘To Him ascend all good words.’ (35: 10).
- c. Physical worship, such as prayer and sacrifice. Allah says: ‘Say: “My prayers, my worship, my living and my dying are for Allah alone, the Lord of all worlds.”’ (6: 162). ‘Pray to your Lord and sacrifice to Him.’ (108: 2). Another type of physical worship is the tawaf, which is the ritual walk around the Ka’bah. Allah says: ‘Thereafter let them complete the rites prescribed for them, fulfil their vows, and again walk around the Ancient House.’ (22: 29). Even the removal of harmful objects from the road counts as physical worship. Speaking about the branches of faith, the Prophet said: ‘The lowest of these is to remove harmful objects from people’s path’.

⁹ Related by al-Bukhari, 52; Muslim, 1599.

- d. Financial worship, which includes all types of expenditure that are offered as worship, such *zakat* and *sadaqah* [obligatory and voluntary charity], donations by will, endowments, etc. Allah says: ‘Charitable donations are only for the poor and the needy, and those who work in the administration of such donations, and those whose hearts are to be won over, for the freeing of people in bondage and debtors, and to further Allah’s cause, and for the traveller in need. This is a duty ordained by Allah, and Allah is All-knowing, Wise.’ (9: 60). ‘Still other Bedouin Arabs believe in Allah and the Last Day, and regard what they spend [for Allah’s cause] as a means to bring them closer to Allah and of [their being remembered] in the Messenger’s prayers. It shall certainly be for them a means of drawing near to Allah. Allah will admit them to His grace, for Allah is much-forgiving, ever-merciful.’ (9: 99). Similarly, feeding others comes under this heading. Allah says: ‘Those who give food – though they need it themselves – to the needy, the orphan and the captive, [saying within themselves] “We feed you for the sake of Allah alone. We desire neither recompense from you, nor thanks.”’ (76: 8–9).

To believe in Allah’s Divinity is a correlative of belief in Allah’s Lordship. When one believes that Allah is the Creator, the Sovereign and the One Who conducts all affairs, one must necessarily believe that He alone is divine Allah and address all worship to Him alone. Allah states this argument to the disbelievers in several *surahs* in the *Qur’an*, such as:

“Mankind, worship your Lord Who has created you and those who lived before you, so that you may become Allah-fearing. He made the earth a couch for you, and the heavens a ceiling. He sent down water from the sky to bring forth fruits for your sustenance. Do not, then, knowingly set up equals to Allah.” (2: 21–22).

“Say: ‘Who is it that provides for you from heaven and earth? Or, Who is it that has power over hearing and sight? Who brings forth the living out of that which is dead, and brings forth the dead out of that which is alive? Who regulates all affairs?’ They will say: ‘Allah.’ Say, then: ‘Will you not, then, fear Him?’ Such is Allah, your true Lord. Apart from the truth, what is left but error? How is it, then, that you turn away?” (10: 31–32).

“Say: ‘All praise be to Allah, and peace be upon His servants whom He has chosen. Who is more worthy: Allah or the false [deities] they associate with Him? Or, Who

is it that has created the heavens and earth, and sends down for you water from the skies, with which We cause to grow gardens of delightful beauty? You could have never caused such trees to grow. Could there be any deity alongside Allah? Nay, they are people who swerve from justice. Or, Who is it that made the earth a stable abode and caused rivers to run in its midst, and has set upon it firm mountains, and has placed a barrier between the two great bodies of water? Could there be any deity alongside Allah? Nay, most of them are devoid of knowledge. Or, who is it that responds to the one in distress when he calls out to Him, and who removes the ill, and makes you inherit the earth? Could there be any deity alongside Allah? Little do they reflect! Or, Who is it that guides you in the midst of the deep darkness of land and sea, and sends forth the winds as heralds of His forthcoming grace? Could there be any deity alongside Allah? Sublimely exalted is Allah above anything they associate with Him. Or, Who is it that creates all life in the first instance, and then brings it forth anew? And Who is it that provides you with sustenance out of heaven and earth? Could there be any deity alongside Allah?’ Say: ‘Produce your proof, if you are truthful.’” (27: 59–64).

Thus, Allah clearly puts the issue before them. As they acknowledge that as the Lord is One, Allah must be One. Furthermore, Allah shows that the deities that polytheists and idolaters claim cannot have any claim to divinity because they have none of the essential qualities of Lordship. Allah says:

“Do they associate with Him those that can create nothing, while they themselves have been created, and neither can they give them any support nor can they even help themselves. If you call them to guidance they will not follow you. It is all the same whether you call them or keep silent. Those whom you invoke beside Allah are Allah’s servants, just like you. Invoke them, then, and let them answer you, if what you claim is true. Have they, perchance, feet on which they could walk, or hands with which to grasp things, or eyes with which to see, or ears with which to hear? Say: ‘Appeal to those you claim to be partners with Allah, and scheme against me, and give me no respite. My guardian is Allah Who has bestowed this Book from on high. It is He Who is the guardian of the righteous. Those whom you invoke beside Him cannot give you any support, nor can they even help themselves. If you pray to them for guidance, they will not hear you. You may see them looking at you but they do not see.’” (7: 191–198).

“Yet, some choose to worship, instead of Him, deities that cannot create anything but are themselves created, and do not have it in their power to avert harm from, or bring benefit to, themselves, and have no power over death, life or resurrection.” (25: 3).

“Say: ‘Call upon those whom you imagine to be partners with Allah. They do not have even an atom’s weight of authority either in the heavens or earth, nor have they any share in either, nor does He have any helper from among them. Before Him, intercession is of no avail, except by one to whom He may have granted permission. When the terror is lifted from their hearts, they will ask [one another]: ‘What has your Lord ordained?’ They will answer: ‘The truth. He is the Most High, the Supreme.’” (34: 22–23).

In view of all this, to address worship to anyone other than Allah is:

- a. The worst type of wrongdoing and injustice. Allah says: ‘To associate partners with Him is indeed a great wrong.’ (31: 13). It is an action that lowers the status of the Lord of all the worlds, giving to others what belongs purely to Him and equating others with Him. He says: ‘Yet those who disbelieve regard other beings as equal to their Lord.’ (6: 1).
- b. The worst of the worst offences. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: ‘Shall I tell you the worst of the worst offences?’ He repeated this three times, and his companions said: ‘Please do, Messenger of Allah’. He said: ‘To associate partners with Allah’.¹⁰
- c. It is the gravest of sins. The Prophet was asked: ‘Which is the most serious sin in Allah’s sight?’ He said: ‘That you set up an equal to Allah when it is He Who created you’.¹¹
- d. It represents a perversion of human nature and going deep into error. Allah says: ‘He who associates partners with Allah is like one who is hurling down from the skies; whereupon he is snatched by the birds, or blown away by the wind to a far-off place.’ (22: 31).

Because it is such a grave matter, Allah has applied to it certain rulings, some of which apply in this life and others in the life to come. These include:

¹⁰ Related by al-Bukhari, 2654; Muslim, 87.

¹¹ Related by al-Bukhari, 4477; Muslim, 86.

- No forgiveness. Allah says: ‘For a certainty, Allah does not forgive that partners are associated with Him. He forgives any lesser sin to whomever He wills. He who associates partners with Allah contrives an awesome sin indeed’. (4: 48).
- Non-admittance into heaven and everlasting punishment in hell. Allah says: ‘Whoever associates partners with Allah, Allah shall forbid him entrance into Paradise and his abode will be the Fire. Wrongdoers will have no helpers.’ (5: 72).
- All good works will come to nothing. Allah says: ‘It has been revealed to you, and to those before you, that if you ever associate partners with Allah, all your works shall certainly come to nothing, and you shall certainly be among the lost.’ (39: 65).

Various groups of people strayed from worshipping Allah alone, including:

- a. Idol worshippers, whether they worshipped trees, stones, statues, humans, jinn, angels, stars, animals or anything else Satan tempted them to worship.
- b. Those who visit graves and make offerings to the dead buried within, appealing to the dead to grant them benefit and spare them harm.
- c. Sorcerers, charlatans and fortune tellers. These worship the jinn in return for what they tell such people or do for them.

As associating partners with Allah in worship is a very serious and grave matter, the Prophet warned against its causes and whatever may lead to it, such as:

- a. Warning against extremism. The Prophet says: ‘Beware of extremism. What brought earlier communities to ruin was that they went to extremes in religion’.¹² He also says: ‘Do not over-praise me as the Christians did with Mary’s son. I am Allah’s servant. Therefore, refer to me as Allah’s servant and messenger’.¹³

Extremism in relation to other devout people and appealing to Allah through them takes different forms. One of these, which takes the form of appealing to such people to grant requests, fulfil wishes and remove harm and distress, is akin to associating partners with Allah. This type of extremism takes a person out of the fold of Islam altogether.

A second type of extremism is deviant but does not come close to associating partners with Allah. This is to appeal to Allah by something that Allah has not permitted, such as people appealing to Allah through devout people, or through their status, rights, sanctity, etc.

¹² Related by Ahmad, 1851 and 3248; al-Nasa’i, 3059; Ibn Majah, 3029.

¹³ Related by al-Bukhari, 3445.

A legitimate appeal is that which cites faith and obedience to Allah, as well as appeal by Allah's names and attributes, or by a good action one has done. Similarly it is permissible to request someone whom we know to be a good believer to pray for something that is of public concern.

It is reported that on the occasion of prayer for rain, Umar said: 'Our Lord, we used to pray to You through our Prophet (peace be upon him) and You used to send us rain. Now we are appealing to You through our Prophet's uncle to please send us rain'. This was not an appeal by al-Abbas but by his prayer and supplication, because he was the Prophet's uncle. Had it been permissible to appeal to Allah by other people, his companions would have appealed to Him by the Prophet, even after he had passed away.

b. Warning against attaching too much importance to graves. This takes different forms, such as:

- Using graves as mosques and prayer places. A'ishah said: 'When Allah's messenger (peace be upon him) suffered his illness, he used to put a piece of cloth on his face. If he felt uncomfortable in breathing, he removed it. He then said: "May Allah curse the Jews and the Christians who made the graves of their prophets places of worship". He thus warned against emulating them. Had it not been for this, his grave would have been built up, but he feared that it would be made a mosque'.¹⁴ He also said: 'Communities before you used to make the graves of their prophets and devouts places of worship. Beware! Do not make any grave a place of worship. I forbid you this'.¹⁵ Making a grave a place of worship means praying near or to the grave, even though no mosque is built next to it or surrounding it.
- Building over graves, plastering them or adding earth other than that dug from them. Abu al-Hayyaj al-Asadi reports: 'Ali ibn Abu Talib said to me: "Shall I give you the same assignment Allah's messenger once gave me: that you break any statue you see and you level down any built up grave."'¹⁶ Jabir ibn Abdullah reports: 'Allah's messenger (peace be upon him) prohibited that a grave should be plastered, sat upon or any structure erected over it.'¹⁷ This prohibition also applies to erecting a dome over a grave, or decorating it in any way.

14 Related by al-Bukhari, 435, 436 and 1390; Muslim, 529 and 531.

15 Related by Muslim, 532.

16 Related by Muslim, 969.

17 Related by Muslim, 970.

- Taking a journey to visit graves. This is included in the Prophet's general instructions: 'Travel may be undertaken to visit only three mosques: the Sacred Mosque [the Ka'bah in Makkah], this mosque of mine and the al-Aqsa Mosque [in Jerusalem].'¹⁸
- Frequently visiting the Prophet's grave. The Prophet said: 'Do not make my grave a place you frequently visit.'¹⁹
- c. Warning against emulating disbelievers and followers of earlier divine religions in their beliefs, worship or characteristic traditions. The Prophet says: 'Stay different from the idolaters'.²⁰ 'Stay different from Zoroastrians'.²¹ 'Stay different from the Jews'.²²
- d. Warning against shaped images. A'ishah reports that Umm Salamah mentioned to the Prophet that she saw a church in Abyssinia and told him about the shaped images in it. He said: 'Those are people who, when a pious man among them dies they build a place of worship over his grave and place in it such shaped images. These are among the worst people in Allah's sight'.²³
- e. Warning against using phrases related to idolatry. Here are some examples:
 - An oath by anything other than Allah. The Prophet says: 'Whoever says an oath by other than Allah takes himself to disbelief or associates a partner with Allah'.²⁴
 - Equating anyone's will with Allah's will. Someone said to the Prophet: 'Whatever Allah and you will'. The Prophet said to him: 'Do you make me equal to Allah? Say: Whatever Allah alone wills'.²⁵
 - To say that this or that caused rain. In a *qudsi* or sacred hadith Allah says: 'Whoever says, "We have had rain because of this planet", disbelieves in Me and believes in the planet.'²⁶ This is extended by way of analogy so as to include any expression attributing any natural phenomenon to anyone other than Allah Almighty.

18 Related by al-Bukhari, 1189; Muslim, 1397.

19 Related by Abu Dawud, 2042.

20 Related by al-Bukhari, 5892; Muslim, 259.

21 Related by Muslim, 260.

22 Related by Abu Dawud, 652.

23 Related by al-Bukhari, 434 [his text]; Muslim, 528.

24 Related by al-Tirmidhi, 1535 [his text]; Abu Dawud, 3251.

25 Related by al-Nasa'i in *Al-Sunan al-Kubra*, 10759.

26 Related by al-Bukhari, 846; Muslim, 71.

f. Warning against actions that lead to associating partners with Allah. This may take different forms, such as:

- Wearing a ring or something around one's hand or neck to protect oneself from illness or to cure illness. 'The Prophet saw a man wearing a copper bracelet. He asked him: "What makes you wear this?" The man said: "To spare me weakness". The Prophet said: "Remove it, because it only adds to your weakness. If you die wearing it, you will never be successful".'²⁷
- Wearing a charm, amulet, necklace, or the like to repel an evil eye. The Prophet says: 'Whoever wears a charm or an amulet [for a purpose], may Allah never fulfil his purpose'.²⁸ In a different version, the Prophet says: 'Whoever wears a charm has associated partners with Allah'.²⁹ He also says: 'Cut every string or necklace hung around any camel's neck'.³⁰
- Idolatrous invocations and talismans. The Prophet says: '[Incomprehensible] supplications, charms and talismans are idolatrous'.³¹ For 'talisman' the Prophet uses a word that was at the time thought to make a man love his wife.
- Slaughter at a place where idolatrous practices are or were held. A man said to the Prophet that he had pledged to sacrifice some camels at a place called Buanah. The Prophet asked people: 'Was there any idol there that used to be worshipped in pre-Islamic days?' They answered: 'No'. He asked: 'Did disbelievers hold any of their festivities there?' They answered: 'No'. The Prophet said to the man: 'Then fulfil your pledge'.³²
- Evil thoughts and bad omens. The Prophet says: 'Bad omen is idolatry. Bad omen is idolatry'.³³

Generally speaking, whatever is thought of as a cause to a particular end when Allah has not made it such a cause, either by experience or a religious text, borders on idolatry.

27 Related by Ahmad, 20000; Ibn Majah, 3531; Ibn Hibban, 6085.

28 Related by Ahmad, 17404; Ibn Hibban, 6086; *al-Hakim in Al-Mustadrak*, 7708.

29 Related by Ahmad, 17422; *al-Hakim in Al-Mustadrak*, 7720.

30 Related by al-Bukhari, 3005; Muslim, 2115.

31 Related by Abu Dawud, 3883; Ibn Majah, 3530.

32 Related by Abu Dawud, 3313; Ibn Majah, 2130.

33 Related by Abu Dawud, 3910; Ibn Majah, 3538.

Four: Belief in Allah's Names and Attributes

This means absolute conviction that all the fine names and superior attributes belong to Allah alone. It includes belief in all the qualities of perfection and majesty Allah attributed to Himself in the Qur'an, or that the Prophet stated to belong to Him, without giving these any shape or form. It also means rejecting whatever negative attributes Allah or the Prophet stated to be alien to Him, including any attribute that equates Him with any creature, without any alteration, distortion or negation. Allah says: 'Allah has the finest names, so appeal to Him by these and stay away from those who blaspheme against His names. They shall be requited for all they do.' (7: 180). 'Nothing bears even the slightest comparability to Him. He alone hears all and sees all.' (42: 11).

Allah's names and attributes are the ones given in the Qur'an or stated by the Prophet. The human mind may not independently conclude what may or may not belong to Him. Indeed, Allah may not be described except as He Himself or His messenger described Him. In this respect, we may not exceed the Qur'an and the hadith. Whatever qualities are not stated by Allah or His messenger to belong to Him may not be attributed to Him. Our attitude should be to refrain from confirming or negating them. If someone uses any such attribute, we should ask him what he means. If the meaning is correct and acceptable, we accept the meaning and reject the words. If the meaning is incorrect, we reject both the meaning and the words. Allah says: 'Do not pursue that of which you have no knowledge. Man's ears, eyes and heart shall all be called to account.' (17: 36).

Allah's names are most beautiful and they are clear references that describe Him. His attributes are complete, with nothing missing in any of them or in any way. Allah says: 'His is the most sublime attribute in the heavens and earth. He is the Almighty, the All-Wise.' (30: 27). They are true as they are. Therefore, they must be understood in their clear and apparent meanings, without any deviation or distortion. It is forbidden to try to twist them by limiting their application or setting examples or forms to them. It is also forbidden to invent names of Allah which He has not given Himself. Likewise, it is forbidden to do what the Arab idolaters did, deriving from His names other names and giving them to their idols. For example,

among Allah's names are *al-Ilah*, *al-'Aziz*, *al-Mannan*.³⁴ They derived from these names which they gave to three of their main idols: al-Lat, al-'Uzza and Manat.

It is obligatory to call Him by His names, both in supplication and in worship. It is also necessary to learn, understand and reflect on them and also to bring one's behaviour in line with them. This is the highest branch of knowledge.

As applied to Himself, Allah's attributes are of two categories:

- a. Actual attributes. These are the qualities that are inseparable from Him, such as life, hearing, seeing, knowledge, ability, will, power, wisdom, etc.
- b. Attributes of action, which are related to Allah's will and wisdom. He does these when He wills and as He wills, according to His wisdom. These include descending, love, hate, pleasure, wonder, smiling, coming, and similar ones mentioned in the Qur'an or the authentic Sunnah.

Some of Allah's attributes may be described as belonging to both categories, such as His attribute of speech. These are actual in the sense that they always belong to Him, and they are attributes of action in respect of each time they are exercised. Alternatively, these may be described as permanent in kind, new in respect of when they are exercised.

Some of Allah's attributes may be described as 'based on information'. These are the ones established merely by information given to us, not by any reasoning on our part. These include Allah's face, hands, eyes, foot and others mentioned in the Qur'an or authentic *hadiths*.

Allah's attributes that are confirmed in the Qur'an, the Sunnah and unanimity of scholars include:

- a. Highness, which are of three types:
 - i. High status: This means that every attribute of His applies to Him in its most perfect, complete and sublime type. He says: 'To Allah belong the finest attributes.' (16: 60).

³⁴ These three names of Allah mean, respectively: the AllahDivinity, the Almighty and the One who bestows favours.

- ii. Power: This means that all might and power belong to Him, so that He holds sway over all His creatures and none can approach Him. He says: ‘He alone holds sway over all His servants.’ (6: 18).
 - iii. His own highness: This means that Allah, the Exalted, is above all His heavens, established on His Throne and separate from His creatures, having nothing of the features of His creatures and they have nothing of His. Limitless is He in His glory and all praise is due to Him. He says: ‘Do you feel secure that He Who is in heaven will not cause the earth to swallow you up when it quakes?’ (67: 16). In an authentic hadith the Prophet asked a young slave woman: ‘Where is Allah?’ She said: ‘In heaven’. He asked her: ‘Who am I?’ She said: ‘You are Allah’s messenger’. He said to her owner: ‘Set her free. She is a believer’.³⁵ Evidence from the Qur’an, the Sunnah, unanimity of scholars, logical reasoning and human nature is plentiful in confirming this type. Indeed such evidence is too plentiful to be stated. Highness is an actual attribute of Allah.
- b. *Istiwa’*.³⁶ Allah says: ‘He is established on the throne.’ (7: 54). This sentence occurs six times in the Qur’an, and we also have: ‘He is the Lord of Grace, established on the throne of His almightiness.’ (20: 5). *Istiwa’* means that, having created the universe, Allah is high and established on His throne in a way that suits His majesty and supremacy. Such establishment is unlike that of any creature. It is an attribute of action.
 - c. Speech. Allah says: ‘Say: “If the sea were ink for my Lord’s words, the sea would surely dry up before my Lord’s words are exhausted, even though we were to add to it another sea to replenish it”’. (18: 109). ‘Allah has spoken His word directly to Moses’. (4: 164). ‘When Moses came for Our appointment and his Lord spoke to him.’ (7: 143). This attribute of speech means that Allah speaks and His speech is real and heard, having letters and sounds, but it is unlike the speech of any crea-

35 Related by Muslim, 537.

36 When this word is used in connection with Allah Almighty it becomes too difficult to translate. Linguistically speaking, *Istiwa’* means ‘to be in a straight or upright position’. If we are to apply this sense to Allah, we will border on giving form to Allah, which is forbidden in Islam. Allah is unlike anything and anyone. Shape and form do not apply to Him. Translators of the Qur’an differ in the way they express it. Therefore, I prefer to retain it in Arabic and give its meaning as the author has explained it.

ture. He speaks whenever and however He wills, and says whatever He wishes to say. He says only what is true and fair and His words are never exhausted. He has always been, and will always be, speaking. As such, speech is both an actual attribute of His and an attribute of action in respect of its times.

All of these types of attributes are true and real. They must be confirmed and accepted as they are stated and understood in their apparent meanings, without any distortion, negation, or attaching any image or form to them. This applies to all of Allah's attributes. What we say about some of them we say about them all, in the same way and measure. Whoever draws distinction between them does so arbitrarily, without supporting evidence.

Some groups of Muslims have erred in what they say about Allah's names and attributes. These include:

- a. The form givers: These exaggerate Allah's attributes to the extent that they fall into the trap of giving them forms. Their problem is that they stress the import of the texts, because Allah addresses people with what they know of His creation.

Their argument does not stand because:

- i. Allah says that there is nothing like Him or equal to Him, and He states this most categorically. He says: 'Nothing bears even the slightest comparability to Him.' (42: 11). 'Do not, then, knowingly set up equals to Allah.' (2: 22). 'There is nothing that could be compared to Him.' (112: 4). It is impossible that there is any contradiction in what Allah says.
- ii. No sound mind accepts that Allah, the Creator who combines all attributes of perfection, could be like a creature who is limited within his domain. Just like Allah is unlike any other, His attributes are unlike those of any other.
- iii. In respect of original meanings, Allah addressed His creatures according to their own understanding. However, despite the fact that the absolute meaning is common to two objects, it does not follow that the reality and the form are also common to both. In fact, the attributes of creatures such as sight, hearing, ability, hands and faces may have the same names but this does not mean that they are exactly the same for all creatures. Needless to say, this applies in greater measure between the Creator and creatures.

- b. The negators: These exaggerate in disclaiming similarity to the extent that they negate Allah's attributes. Their problem is they claim that to confirm Allah's attributes will necessarily lead to drawing similarity to creatures, because these attributes also apply to creatures. Therefore they must be inapplicable to the Creator. Thus, they say that Allah has an absolute existence to which no attribute is attached. The worst of these are al-Qaramitah, an esoteric sect who negate the two opposites. Al-Jahmiyyah deny both names and attributes while al-Mu'tazilah confirm Allah's names but deny His attributes.

Their argument is refuted as follows:

- i. Allah has stated His attributes in definitive, clear and absolutely unequivocal verses, combining these with negating any similarity or comparability with anything. He says: 'Nothing bears even the slightest comparability to Him. He is the One Who hears all and sees all.' (42: 11). Allah's statements admit no contradiction.
 - ii. To confirm an absolute existence that admits no description and has no reality but remains merely as a mental existence will inevitably lead to denying the existence of the Creator Himself.
 - iii. Using general and total words to describe an entity does not necessarily mean that these apply in exactly the same way to another entity. Each may be one to which that description applies. When a quality is restricted or added, the surface commonality no longer applies.
- c. The interpreters: These believe that some attributes, such as those of action and information, do not relate to real attributes of Allah and so they searched for other meanings to interpret texts. They had no basis justifying their attempts for such interpretation other than giving the apparent meaning new meanings. They call this effort of distortion 'an interpretation'.

Their argument does not stand for the following reasons:

- i. Firstly, Allah knows Himself best, and He is more truthful and better outspoken than any of His creatures. Allah's messenger is best aware of his Lord, and he is more truthful and clearly outspoken than anyone else. He is also more sincere in his advice to his community than anyone else. How can anyone seek

- to improve on what Allah and His Messenger say, suggesting that their words are confusing and leading to error?
- ii. Secondly, speech should always be taken as it is intended. It may not be interpreted unless there is clear evidence requiring that it should be taken figuratively, rather than literally. There is no evidence requiring this in the present case.
 - iii. Thirdly, the Prophet (peace be upon him) has provided a full explanation of what he received from his Lord and he delivered his message with complete clarity. He could never have omitted an explanation of this highly important issue, leaving it to such twisters of the facts to come up with their own invented meanings.
- d. The advocates of ignorance. These claim that what Allah tells of Himself, or what the Prophet tells about Him, is merely a message that gives no clear meaning, is known only to Allah Himself and no one may attain its true knowledge. They call this method ‘delegation’.

Their argument has no basis for the following reasons:

- i. It is impossible that knowledge of Allah, which is the most honourable branch of faith, is closed to all and that neither reason nor revealed texts can provide any clue to it.
- ii. Allah has revealed the Qur’an in the clear Arabic tongue and has commanded His servants to understand and reflect on its meanings, without exception. This clearly implies that meanings can be gathered and arrived at. As for reality and form, these are matters that Allah has not told us anything about and they belong to Allah’s own knowledge.
- iii. The approach of these people suggests that the earliest generations of the Muslim community were ignorant, illiterate people with no knowledge of Allah’s book apart from wishful thoughts. They imagine that those early generations found the verses speaking about Allah’s attributes enigmatic and providing no clear meaning.





Belief in the Angels

*T*his means a firm conviction that Allah created a type of creature that worships Him and is totally obedient to Him. Angels are close to Him, live in His heavens and He granted them the power to implement what He commands them.

Belief in the angels is not complete unless one believes that:

One: They are honoured servants of Allah, close to Him, and they submit fully to Him

This means that they have nothing of the attributes of Lordship or Divinity. Allah says:

‘They say: “The Lord of Grace has taken to Himself a son!” Limitless is He in His glory! No; they are but His honoured servants. They do not speak until He has spoken, and they act at His behest. He knows all that lies before them and all behind them. They do not intercede for any but those whom He has already graced with his goodly acceptance, since they themselves stand in reverent awe of Him.’ (21: 26–28). ‘They fear their Lord, Who is high above them, and do as they are bidden.’ (16: 50). ‘[The angels] never disobey Allah in whatever He commands them and always do what they are bidden to do.’ (66: 6). ‘[They are] noble and devout.’ (80: 16). ‘On the day He gathers them all together, He will say to the angels: “Was it you that these people worshipped?” They will answer: “Limitless are You in Your glory! You alone are Our patron, not they. In fact they worshipped the jinn and most of them believed in them”.’ (34: 40–41). ‘[The angels] said, “Limitless are You in Your glory! We only know what You have taught us. Indeed, You alone are All-Knowing, Wise.”’ (2: 32).

Two: They are given fine names

If we know the name of any of them we believe in him as having this name. Others, whose names we do not know, we believe in them along with the rest of angels. Those whose names we know include Gabriel, Michael, Israfil, the angel of death, Malik; Ridwan, Munkar and Nakir, as these have occurred in the Qur’an and the Sunnah.

Three: Angels are created out of light, have wings and they have great and different shapes

Allah says: ‘All praise is due to Allah, the Originator of the heavens and the earth, Who assigns angels to be messengers, endowed with wings, two, or three, or four.

He adds to His creation what He pleases. Indeed Allah has power over all things.’ (35: 1). The Prophet says: ‘The angels have been created out of light’.³⁷ The Prophet is stated ‘to have seen Gabriel in his own form, having six hundred wings’.³⁸

The Prophet says: ‘I have been permitted to say that one of Allah’s angels, who is one of [the angels] who carry Allah’s throne, the space between the bottom edge of his ear and his shoulder is equal to the distance of seven hundred years of travel’.³⁹ Hence, they are real creatures, not merely mental powers as some people have alleged. They are numerous though none other than the Creator knows their true number. In Anas’s report of the Prophet’s ascension to heaven: ‘The often-visited House was lifted before the Prophet in the seventh heaven. Every day seventy thousand angels pray inside it. When they leave, they do not go back to it. This is their last duty’.⁴⁰

Four: They are ranged in rank, extolling Allah’s glory

Allah has inspired them to glorify Him and do His bidding. He gave them the power to carry out His commands. He says: ‘Every single one of us has his appointed place: we are ranged in ranks, and we too extol His limitless glory.’ (37: 164–166). ‘If the disbelievers are too arrogant, those who are with your Lord glorify Him night and day and never grow weary of that.’ (41: 38). ‘They do not slacken.’ (21: 20).

Hakim ibn Hazam said: ‘As Allah’s messenger (peace be upon him) was with his companions, he said to them: “Do you hear what I am hearing?” They said: “We do not hear anything”. He said: “I hear the sound of heaven. Why should it not have a sound when on every hand span of it there is an angel prostrating himself or standing in his worship?”’⁴¹

Five: They may not be seen

Angels belong to the world that lies beyond the reach of human perception during this life, except as Allah wills; as happened when Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) saw Gabriel in his own form. However, they will be seen in the life to come, as Allah says: ‘On the day when they shall see the angels, the sinners will receive no

37 Related by Muslim, 2996.

38 Related by al-Bukhari, 3232 and 3234; Muslim, 174 and 177.

39 Related by Abu Dawud, 4727.

40 Related by al-Bukhari, 3207; Muslim, 162.

41 Related by al-Tabarani in *Al-Mu’jam al-Kabir*, 3122; *al-Albani, Al-Silsilah al-Sahihah* ‘The Authentic Series’, 852.

happy news then, and they will say: “a forbidding ban!” (25: 22). ‘The angels will come in to them from every gate.’ (13: 23). However, Allah has given angels the ability to transform themselves into human form. In reference to Mary, He says: ‘We then sent to her Our Spirit, who appeared to her in the shape of a well-made human being.’ (19: 17). ‘Our messengers came to Abraham with good news. They bade him peace, and he answered: “Peace [be to you]”. He then hastened to bring them a roasted calf. But when he saw that their hands did not reach out to it, he felt their conduct strange and became apprehensive of them. They said: “Do not be alarmed. We are sent to the people of Lot.”’ (11: 69–70). ‘When Our messengers came to Lot he was troubled on their account, for he was powerless to offer them protection. He said: “This is a woeful day”. His people came running towards him, for they had been long keen on abominable practices. He said: “My people! Here are my daughters: they are purer for you. Have fear of Allah and do not disgrace me by wronging my guests. Is there not one right-minded man among you?”’ (11: 77–78). In all these cases, the angels came in human form. The same was the case when Gabriel, in the form of a man wearing very white clothes and having dark black hair, came to the Prophet when he was with his companions. He sometimes came to the Prophet in the form of his companion, Dihyah al-Kalbi.

Six: Certain tasks are assigned to them

In addition to their continuous and essential task of worshipping Allah and glorifying Him, the angels are assigned various tasks, such as:

1. Bringing revelations:

This task is assigned to Gabriel. Allah says: ‘Say: “The Holy Spirit has brought it down from your Lord in truth, so as to strengthen the believers and to provide guidance and good news to those who surrender themselves to Allah.”’ (16: 102). ‘Most certainly, this [Qur’an] has been bestowed from on high by the Lord of all the worlds. The trustworthy Spirit has brought it down into your heart – so that you may give warning, in the clear Arabic tongue.’ (26: 192–195).

2. Causing rain and vegetation:

This task is assigned to Michael. The Jews said to Allah’s messenger (peace be upon him): ‘Had you said Michael, who brings mercy, vegetation and rain, we

would have accepted'.⁴² In another *hadith*, 'The Prophet said to Gabriel: "What is Michael assigned?" Gabriel said: "Vegetation and rain"'.⁴³

3. Blowing the Trumpet:

This task, to bring about the final stunning of all creatures and the resurrection, is assigned to Israfil. Allah says: 'The trumpet will be sounded, and all creatures that are in the heavens and earth will fall down senseless, except those Allah wills to be spared. It will then be sounded a second time, and they will rise and look around them.' (39: 68).

These three angels: Gabriel, Michael and Israfil, are the master angels because their tasks are related to life. Gabriel's task concerns the life of hearts and minds; Michael's concerns the life of plants, and Israfil's concerns physical life. The one who commands the highest honour is Gabriel, the Holy Spirit.

4. Protecting humans:

Allah says: 'Each has guardian angels before him and behind him, who watch him by Allah's command. Indeed Allah does not change a people's condition unless they first change what is in their hearts. When Allah wills people to suffer some misfortune, none can avert it. Besides Him, they have none to protect them.' (13: 11).

5. Recording people's actions:

Allah says: 'Two angel-messengers are set to record, one on his right and one on his left, and every word he utters [is noted down by] an ever-present watcher.' (50: 17-18).

6. Supporting the believers

Allah says: 'Your Lord inspired the angels, saying: "I am with you. So, give courage to the believers. I shall cast terror into the hearts of the disbelievers. Strike, then, their necks and strike off their every fingertip."' (8: 12).

7. Gathering people's souls

This is the task assigned to the angel of death. Allah says: 'Say: "The angel of death, who has been given charge of you, will gather you and then to your Lord you will be brought back."' (32: 11).

⁴² Related by Ahmad, 2483.

⁴³ Related by al-Tabarani in *Al-Mu'jam al-Kabir*, 14212.

8. Questioning the dead in their graves about their Lord, faith and the Prophet:

The angels who ask the questions are Munkar and Nakir. Anas ibn Malik reports that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said:

When a human being is buried in his grave and his people leave, as he hears the sound of their shoes two angels will come to him, sit him up and ask: ‘What did you say about this man, Muhammad?’ A believer will answer: ‘I bear witness that he is Allah’s servant and messenger’. He will be told: ‘Look at the place you were assigned in hell: Allah has replaced it for you with a place in heaven’. He sees both places. A hypocrite or a disbeliever will be asked: ‘What did you say about this man?’ He will answer: ‘I do not know. I said what other people said’. It will be said to him: ‘May you never know.’ He will be struck once with iron hammers, and he will send a cry that will be heard by all behind him except humans and jinn’.⁴⁴

In al-Tirmidhi’s version, narrated by Abu Hurayrah: ‘When a person – or he might have said: any of you – is buried, two blue-black angels come to him: one of them is called Munkar and the other Nakir. They will ask: ‘What did you say about this man? ...’” The rest of the *hadith* is the same.⁴⁵

9. Taking care of the unborn.

This includes breathing the soul into the embryo and writing down its means of livelihood, duration of life, actions and whether it will be happy or unhappy.

Abdullah ibn Mas‘ud narrated: ‘Allah’s messenger (peace be upon him), the truthful, the believed, said to us: “The creation of each of you is brought together in its mother’s belly for forty days in the form of a seed, then it will be a clinging cell mass for a similar period, then a morsel of flesh for a similar period. Then the angel is sent and commanded about four matters. He is told: write down its actions, means of livelihood, lifespan and whether it is happy or unhappy. Then the soul is breathed into it ...’⁴⁶

10. Guarding hell:

Allah says: ‘We have appointed none other than angels to guard the Fire.’ (74: 31).

44 Related by al-Bukhari, 1374; Muslim, 2870.

45 Related by al-Tirmidhi, 1071.

46 Related by al-Bukhari, 3208; Muslim, 2643.

‘They will cry, “Malik, if only your Lord would put an end to us!” He will answer: “You are here to stay.”’ (43: 77). ‘Believers! Guard yourselves and your families against a fire fuelled by people and stones, over which are appointed angels, stern and mighty, who never disobey Allah in whatever He commands them and always do what they are bidden to do.’ (66: 6).

11. Praying to Allah to forgive the believers and praying on their behalf. Bringing them good news and being hospitable to them in heaven:

Allah says: ‘Those who bear the Throne and those around it extol their Lord’s limitless glory and praise, and have faith in Him, and pray for the forgiveness of all believers: “Our Lord! You embrace all things with [Your] grace and knowledge. Forgive, then, those who turn to You in repentance and follow Your path, and shield them from the suffering in the blazing Fire. And, our Lord, admit them to the gardens of perpetual bliss You have promised them, together with the righteous from among their ancestors, spouses and offspring. You alone are the Almighty, the Wise. Shield them from all evil. Anyone whom on that day You shall shield from evil, You shall have graced with mercy. That will be the supreme triumph.”’ (40: 7–9). ‘As for those who say: “Our Lord is Allah,” and then steadfastly pursue the right way. For these, the angels will descend, saying: “Have no fear, and do not grieve, but rejoice in the good news of Paradise which you have been promised.”’ (41: 30). ‘The angels will come in to them from every gate, [saying]: “Peace be upon you, because you have persevered”. Blessed indeed is the attainment of the [ultimate] abode.’ (13: 23–24).





Belief in Allah's Books

*I*t is absolute conviction that Allah, the Exalted, revealed, from on high, to His prophets, books with truth as guidance and mercy for mankind, a warning to them, an argument against them and an explanation to everything. To believe in Allah's books means:

One: Believing that they were revealed by Allah with the truth

Allah says: 'He has revealed to you this Book with the truth, confirming what was revealed before it; and He has already revealed the Torah and the Gospel.' (3: 3). They are the word of neither an angel of high position nor a messenger of Allah, but are Allah's book and His word. As such, they combine infallibility with sacredness.

Two: We believe particularly in those books we know by name and generally in others

The greatest of Allah's books are:

1. The Torah Allah revealed to Moses (peace be upon him).

Allah says: 'He said: "Moses, I have chosen you of all mankind and favoured you by entrusting My messages to you and by My speaking to you. Take then what I have given you and be thankful." We wrote for him on the tablets all manner of admonition, clearly spelling out everything, and (said to him): "Implement them with strength and determination, and bid your people to observe what is best in them. I shall show you the abode of the transgressors."' (7: 144–145). 'Indeed, it is We Who revealed the Torah, containing guidance and light. By it did the prophets, who had surrendered themselves to Allah, judge among the Jews, and so did the rabbis and scholars: [they gave judgment] in accordance with what had been entrusted to their care of Allah's Book and to which they themselves were witnesses.' (5: 44).

2. The Gospel Allah revealed to Jesus (peace be upon him).

Allah says: 'After these We sent Jesus, son of Mary. We gave him the Gospel.' (57: 27). 'We gave him the Gospel, containing guidance and light, confirming what had already been revealed before it in the Torah and giving guidance and admonition to the Allah-fearing.' (5: 46).

3. The Qur'an Allah revealed to Muhammad (peace be upon him).

This is the greatest and most important of all Allah's books. Allah says: 'And to you We have revealed the Book, setting forth the truth, confirming the Scriptures which had already been revealed before it and superseding them.' (5: 48). 'Blessed is He Who from on high bestowed upon His servant the standard to discern the true from the false, so that it might be a warning to all the worlds.' (25: 1).

Allah's books also include the Psalms revealed to David (peace be upon him). Allah says: 'We gave the Psalms to David.' (17: 55) and another of Allah's books is what He revealed to Abraham (peace be upon him): 'All this has indeed been stated in the earlier revelations; the scriptures of Abraham and Moses.' (87: 18–19).

Three: Believing in what remains intact of them

Allah tells us that the books He revealed to the Children of Israel suffered distortion, both in word and meaning. He says: 'They now distort the meaning of [revealed] words, taking them out of their context.' (5: 13). 'They tamper with words out of their context.' (5: 41). 'There are some among them who twist their tongues when quoting the Scriptures, so that you may think that [what they say] is from the Scriptures, when it is not from the Scriptures. They say: "It is from Allah", when it is not from Allah. Thus, they deliberately say of Allah what they know to be a lie.' (3: 78).

However, Allah has guaranteed to keep, the great Qur'an, intact. He says: 'It is We Ourselves Who have bestowed this reminder from on high, and it is We Who shall preserve it intact.' (15: 9). He has taken care of it, as He says: 'Those who reject this reminder [i.e. the Qur'an] when it comes to them ... It is indeed a sublime book; no falsehood can ever touch it openly or in a stealthy manner. It is bestowed from on high by One Who is wise, worthy of praise.' (41: 41–42).

Based on these facts, the stories and information contained in earlier revelations are of three types:

- a. Those that are consistent with the Qur'an. We believe these to be true because the Qur'an confirms them. These include the floods at Noah's time, the stories of Abraham, Joseph and Moses, the drowning of the Pharaoh and his troops, the miracles given to Jesus, etc. However, we believe in these in general terms, without reference to the details given in them.

- b. Those that are contrary to what is in the Qur'an. We believe these to be false and have been introduced into Allah's books by human beings. These include what they allege of Prophet Lot drinking wine and committing incest with his two daughters. May Allah grant honour to Lot, far be it from him to do such abominable deeds. Also included in these is the allegation that Jesus is the Lord or son of Allah or one of the Trinity. Exalted is Allah, far above what they allege.
- c. Those that are neither consistent with nor contrary to the Qur'an. These we neither believe nor disbelieve in. The Prophet says: 'If people of earlier religions speak to you, do not hold their discourse as true or false. Instead, say: "We believe in Allah, His books and His messengers"'. Thus, if what they tell you is true, you would not have disbelieved the truth, and if it is false, you would not have believed falsehood'.⁴⁷ However, it is permissible to quote and relate these. The Prophet says: 'Report what the Children of Israel tell you. There is no harm in that'.⁴⁸ Yet, most such stories are of little benefit.

Four: Judgement must be according to the Qur'an

Allah has revealed His great book, the Qur'an, superseding all His earlier revelations. Thus, it confirms their truth but prevails over them as it includes all what they contain of what is beneficial in human life. It abrogates some of their rulings, confirms others and adds what is necessary. Therefore, it is unacceptable to follow any law other than the Qur'an. Having mentioned the Torah and the Gospel and confirming that they contain 'guidance and light', Allah says:

"And to you We have revealed the Book, setting forth the truth, confirming the Scriptures which had already been revealed before it and superseding them. Judge, then, between them in accordance with what Allah has revealed and do not follow their vain desires, forsaking thereby the truth that has come to you. To every one of you We have given a code of law and a way of life. Had Allah so willed, He could have made you all one community; but (it is His wish) to test you by means of that which He has bestowed on you. Vie, then, with one another in doing good works. To Allah you shall all return. He will then make you understand all that over which

⁴⁷ Related by Ahmad, 17225; Abu Dawud, 3644.

⁴⁸ Related by al-Bukhari, 3461.

you now differ. Hence, judge between them in accordance with what Allah has revealed, and do not follow their vain desires and beware of them lest they tempt you away from any part of what Allah has revealed to you. If they turn away, then know that it is Allah's will to afflict them for some of their sins. Indeed, a great many people are transgressors. Do they desire to be ruled by the law of pagan ignorance? But for those who are firm in their faith, who can be a better law-giver than Allah?" (5: 48–50).

'We have bestowed this book on you from on high, setting forth the truth, so that you may judge between people in accordance with what Allah has taught you. Hence, do not contend with those who betray their trust.' (4: 105).

Five: Believing entirely in Allah's Book

Allah says: 'Do you, then, believe in some parts of the Scriptures and deny others? Those of you who do this will have nothing for their reward other than ignominy in this life and, on the Day of Resurrection, they shall be committed to a most grievous suffering. For Allah is not unaware of what you do.' (2: 85). 'See for yourselves how it is you who love them and they do not love you. You believe in all revelations.' (3: 119).

Six: It is forbidden to suppress or distort Allah's Books, indulge in contention over them or set some of Allah's verses against other verses of Allah

Allah says: 'Allah has made a covenant with those who were granted revelations (when He bade them): "Make it known to mankind and do not conceal it." But they cast it behind their backs and bartered it away for a trifling price. Evil is that which they have taken in exchange for it.' (3: 187).

"Those who suppress any part of the Scriptures Allah has revealed, and barter it away for a paltry price, eat nothing but fire in their bellies. Allah will not speak to them on the Day of Resurrection, nor will He purify them. Painful suffering awaits them. It is they who barter guidance for error and forgiveness for suffering. How great is their endurance of the Fire! That is because Allah has revealed the Book with the truth. Those who are at variance with the Book are most deeply in the wrong." (2: 174–176).

“Woe, then, to those who write down, with their own hands, [something which they claim to be of] the Scriptures, and then say, ‘This is from Allah’, in order to get for it a trifling price. Woe to them for what their hands have written and woe to them for what they earn.” (2: 79).

The Prophet (peace be upon him) once heard some people who were in dispute. He said:

‘This you are doing was the cause of the ruin that befell communities before you. They set parts of Allah’s book against others. Allah has revealed His book with all its parts confirming other parts. Therefore, do not set any part of it as contradicting another. What you know of it you may report, but what you do not know you must refer to the ones who know it’.⁴⁹



⁴⁹ Related by Ahmad, 6741.



Belief in Allah's Messengers

*T*his means absolute conviction that Allah chose some individuals from among mankind and assigned them as His messengers. He gave them revelations, to give good news, to warn people, to call on them to worship Him alone, to abandon false deities Allah and as proof against them. .

Allah says: ‘Allah chooses message bearers from among the angels and from among men. Allah hears all and sees all.’ (22: 75). ‘The messengers We sent before you were but men whom We inspired. So, if you have not realized this, ask those who are endowed with knowledge.’ (16: 43). ‘[These] were messengers sent to bring good news and to give warning, so that people may have no argument against Allah once these messengers [had come]. Allah is Almighty, Wise.’ (4: 165). ‘Indeed, We have raised a messenger in every community, [who said to them]: “Worship Allah and shun the devil.”’ (16: 36).

Belief in Allah's messengers includes:

One: Belief that their message comes from Allah, by His will and wisdom

Allah says: ‘When a sign comes to them, they say: ‘We shall not believe unless we are given the same as Allah's messengers were given. But Allah knows best whom to entrust with His message.’ (6: 124). ‘They also say, “Why was this Qur'an not revealed to some great man of the two cities?” Is it they who apportion your Lord's grace? It is We Who deal out to them their livelihood in the life of this world, and raise some in rank above others, so that some of them may take others into their service. Your Lord's grace is better than all that they can amass.’ (43: 31–32).

Becoming a prophet or Allah's messenger cannot be attained by personal effort or training, as some deviant Sufis allege. Nor can they be attained through conversion of a host of sacred, imaginary and influential forces, as some philosophers allege. It is a matter of Allah's choice, and He bestows His grace on those whom He knows to be worthy of the task.

Two: Belief in all Allah's messengers: specifically those whose names we know but also those names we know not

Among the messengers we know by name are those mentioned in the following verse that first mentions Abraham: 'We bestowed on him Isaac and Jacob, and We guided each of them as We had guided Noah before them. Among his offspring were [the Prophets] David, Solomon, Job, Joseph, Moses and Aaron. Thus do We reward those who do good. And Zachariah, John, Jesus and Elijah; who were all righteous. And Ishmael, Elisha, Jonah and Lot. Every one of them did We favour above all people.' (6: 84–86). Allah also says: 'We sent other messengers before your time; some We have given you an account of, while others We have not.' (40: 78).

It is an incumbent duty to believe in all messengers because they preached the same message. Allah says: 'In matters of faith, He has ordained for you the same as He had enjoined on Noah – that which We have revealed to you [Muhammad] – and as We enjoined on Abraham, Moses and Jesus: "Steadfastly uphold the faith and do not divide into factions."' (42: 13). To deny any one of them is to deny them all. Allah says: 'Noah's people denied Allah's messengers.' (26: 105). Yet Noah was the first messenger. It is not permissible to draw distinctions between Allah's messengers or to believe in some of them but not others. Whoever does this is a disbeliever. Allah says: 'Those who deny Allah and His messengers, and want to make a distinction between [belief in] Allah and [belief in] His messengers, and say: "We believe in some but we deny others"', and want to pursue a path in-between: those, in truth, are unbelievers. We have prepared for the disbelievers a humiliating suffering. As for those who believe in Allah and His messengers and make no distinction between any of them – to them He will give their reward. Allah is indeed much-forgiving, ever-merciful.' (4: 150-2).

Three: Believing them and accepting everything they informed us about

Allah says: 'Mankind, the messenger has now come to you with the truth from your Lord. Believe, then, for it is better for you. But if you disbelieve, know that to Allah belongs all that is in the heavens and all that is on earth. Allah is indeed all-Knowing, Wise.' (4: 170) 'And the one who has come forth with the truth and believed in -it is they who are Allah-fearing.' (39: 33). 'By the star when it sets.

This fellow-man of yours has not gone astray, nor is he deluded. He does not speak out of his own fancy. That [which he delivers to you] is nothing less than a revelation sent down to him, something that a very mighty one has taught him.’ (53: 1–5).

All authentic stories of earlier prophets stated in the Qur’an or mentioned by Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) must be believed. Reports mentioned in other scriptures are subject to the conditions detailed under ‘Belief in Allah’s books’, as described above. Reports attributed to Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) are subject to the rules developed by scholars of *hadith* in order to confirm what is authentic and what is not. When such a report is confirmed as authentic, it is our duty to believe in it.

Four: Obeying and following them; and referring to them in all matters

Allah says: ‘We have sent every messenger so that he should be obeyed by Allah’s leave.’ (4: 64). It is incumbent on every community to obey and follow the prophet Allah sent them. As the last of them, Muhammad’s message abrogates and prevails over all that preceded it of divine messages. Obedience of Muhammad and following him is, therefore, a duty of everyone who hears of him. Allah says:

“Those who follow the Messenger, the unlettered Prophet whom they shall find described in the Torah and the Gospel that are with them. He commands them to do what is right and forbids them to do what is wrong, and makes lawful to them the good things of life and forbids them all that is foul. He lifts from them their burdens and the shackles that weigh upon them. Those, therefore, who believe in him, honour and support him, and follow the light that has been bestowed from on high through him shall indeed be successful. Say: ‘Mankind, I am indeed Allah’s Messenger to you all. It is to Him that sovereignty over the heavens and earth belongs. There is no deity other than Him. He alone grants life and causes death. Believe, then, in Allah and His Messenger, the unlettered Prophet, who believes in Allah and His words. And follow him, so that you may be rightly guided.’” (7: 157–158).

‘Say: “If you love Allah, follow me; Allah will love you and forgive you your sins. Allah is Much-Forgiving, Ever-Merciful.” Say: “Obey Allah and the messenger.” If they turn their backs, Allah does not love the disbelievers.’ (3: 31–32) ‘But no, by your Lord! They do not really believe unless they make you judge in all dis-

putes between them, and then find in their hearts no bar to an acceptance of your decisions and give themselves up in total submission.’ (4: 65).

Five: Owing allegiance, loving, and respecting Allah’s messengers

Allah says: ‘Your patron is only Allah, and His Messenger and those who believe – those who attend to their prayers, pay their zakat and bow down in worship. Those who ally themselves with Allah and His Messenger and the believers [will find that] the party of Allah will be victorious.’ (5: 55–56). ‘When Jesus became conscious of their rejection of the faith, he asked: “Who will be my helpers in the cause of Allah?” The disciples replied: “We are [your] helpers in Allah’s cause. We believe in Allah. Bear you witness that we have surrendered ourselves to Him.”’. (3: 52). ‘Say: “If your fathers, your sons, your brothers, your spouses, your clan, and the property you have acquired, and the business in which you fear a decline, and the dwellings in which you take pleasure, are dearer to you than Allah and His Messenger and the struggle in His cause, then wait until Allah shall make manifest His will. Allah does not provide guidance to the transgressors.”’ (9: 24). ‘Peace be upon all Allah’s messengers.’ (37: 181). ‘We have sent you [Muhammad] as a witness, a bearer of good news and a warner so that you [people] may believe in Allah and His Messenger, support Him, honour Him and extol His limitless glory morning and evening.’ (48: 8–9). ‘Allah and His angels bless the Prophet. Believers! Bless him and give him greetings of peace.’ (33: 56).

The Prophet says: ‘None of you attains to faith until I am dearer to him than his parents, children and all people’.⁵⁰



⁵⁰ Related by al-Bukhari, 15; Muslim, 44.



Belief in the Last Day

*T*his means absolute certainty that Allah will not judge His servants until a day when He resurrects them from their graves, reckons their deeds and holds them accountable for them and requites them for what they did in life either by admitting them into heaven or punishing them in hell. Allah says: ‘He only grants them respite till the Day when eyes will stare fixedly in horror.’ (14: 42). ‘The disbelievers allege that they will not be raised from the dead. Say, “Yes indeed! By my Lord, you will certainly be raised from the dead, and then you will certainly be told of all that you have done. This is easy for Allah.”’ (64: 7). ‘And when the Last Hour strikes, they will all be divided. As for those who believed and did righteous deeds, they shall be happy in a garden of delight; but as for those who rejected the truth and denied Our revelations and the certainty of the meeting in the Hereafter, they will be brought up for punishment.’ (30: 14–16).

Belief in the Last Day includes:

One: Belief in what comes after death

This includes death, the trial in the grave by the two angels who question the deceased on their Lord, religion and prophet, as well as the punishment or bliss in the grave during the transition period between this life and the Last Day . Allah says: ‘If you could but see how the angels gather up the souls of the disbelievers. They strike them on their faces and their backs and [say]: “Taste the punishment of burning.”’ (8: 50). ‘As for those who say: “Our Lord is Allah,” and then steadfastly pursue the right way, for these the angels will descend, saying: “Have no fear, and do not grieve, but rejoice in the good news of Paradise which you have been promised.”’ (41: 30). ‘Allah delivered him from the evils of their scheming, whereas grievous suffering was to encompass Pharaoh’s folk. Before the fire they are brought, morning and evening, and then on the Day when the Last Hour comes, it will be said: “Cast Pharaoh’s people into the worst suffering.”’ (40: 45–46).

Anas ibn Malik reported that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: ‘When a human being is buried in his grave and his people leave, as he hears the sound of their shoes, two angels will come to him and sit him up and ask him: “What did you say about this man, Muhammad?” A believer will answer: “I bear witness that he is Allah’s

servant and messenger”. He will be told: “Look at the place you were assigned in hell: Allah has replaced it for you with a place in heaven”. He sees both places. A hypocrite or an unbeliever will be asked: “What did you say about this man?” He will answer: “I do not know. I said what other people said”. It will be said to him: “May you never know.” He will be struck once with iron hammers, and he will send a cry that will be heard by all behind him except humans and jinn’.⁵¹

Ibn Abbas reported: ‘The Prophet (peace be upon him) passed by two graves and he said: “They are suffering torment, but not for something too grave. One of them did not shield himself when urinating and the other was used to backbiting”. He took a fresh branch from a date tree and tore it into two halves, placing one on each grave. He was asked: “Why have you done this, Messenger of Allah?” He said: “Perhaps their torment will be lessened unless the branches become dry”.’⁵²

Two: Belief in the Last Hour and its portents

Allah says: ‘It is Allah Who has bestowed revelation from on high, setting forth the truth and established the balance. For all you know, the Last Hour may well be near. Those who do not believe in it seek to hasten it, whereas the believers stand in awe of it and know it to be the truth. Those who argue about the Last Hour have gone far astray.’ (42: 17–18). ‘Are they waiting for the Last Hour to come upon them of a sudden? Its portents have already come; but once it has arrived, what benefit will it then be to them if they take heed?’ (47: 18).

Among the major portents of the Last Hour are the events referred to by the Prophet when he said: ‘It will not occur until you have seen ten signs before it’, which he stated as ‘the smoke, the false Messiah, the talking beast, the sun rising from the west, the second coming of Jesus, son of Mary, Gog and Magog and three eclipses: one in the east, another in the west and a third in the Arabian Peninsula. The last of these portents is a fire starting in Yemen and driving people to their place of gathering’.⁵³

The Last Hour will arrive all of a sudden and very quickly. Allah says: ‘They ask you about the Last Hour: “When will it come to pass?” Say: “Knowledge of it rests with my Lord alone. None but He will reveal it at its appointed time. It will weigh

51 Related by al-Bukhari, 1374; Muslim, 2870.

52 Related by al-Bukhari, 218; Muslim, 292.

53 Related by Muslim, 2901. The smoke is mentioned in the Qur’an: 44: 10 and the talking beast in 27: 82.

heavily on the heavens and earth; and it will not fall on you except suddenly.” They will ask you further as if you yourself persistently enquire about it. Say: “Knowledge of it rests with Allah alone, though most people remain unaware.” (7: 187). ‘The advent of the Last Hour will be accomplished in the twinkling of an eye, or even less.’ (16: 77). It occurs when the Trumpet is blown for the first time and all creatures will be stunned. Allah says: ‘The Trumpet will be sounded and all creatures that are in the heavens and earth will fall down senseless, except those Allah wills to be spared.’ (39: 68).

Three: Belief in the resurrection

This refers to Allah bringing out all of mankind from their graves, alive, barefoot, naked, uncircumcised and with nothing. This occurs after the second blow of the Trumpet. Allah says: ‘[The Trumpet] will then be sounded a second time, and they will rise and look around them.’ (39: 68). ‘The Trumpet will be sounded, and out of their graves they will rise and hasten to their Lord.’ (36: 51). The Prophet says: ‘On the Day of Resurrection, people will be gathered; barefoot, naked and uncircumcised’.⁵⁴

Four: Belief in the main conditions of the Day of Judgement

Allah says: ‘The Day when all mankind shall stand before the Lord of all worlds?’ (83: 6). All mankind will stand before Allah in open space for a long time. They will hear the summons and they will see far ahead. The sun will be brought near them and they will perspire profusely. A pond will be there for the believers. Records will be opened and scales placed while the *sirat*, the narrow bridge over hell, is erected. These are all grave and hard situations.

Five: Belief in the reckoning

Allah says: ‘To Us they shall surely return, when We shall bring them to account’. (88: 25–26) ‘He who is given his record in his right hand will in time have a lenient reckoning.’ (84: 7–8). ‘Whoever does an atom’s weight of good shall see it then, and whoever does an atom’s weight of evil shall see it then also.’ (99: 7–8). ‘We shall set up just scales on the Day of Resurrection, so that no soul shall be wronged in the least. If there be but the weight of a mustard seed, We shall bring it [to account]. Sufficient are We for reckoning.’ (21: 47).

⁵⁴ Related by al-Bukhari, 3349 and 6527; Muslim, 2859 and 2860.

The reckoning of mankind's deeds is of two types:

- a. For believers it is either a statement or an accountability. The statement applies to those happy ones for whom Allah has already promised the ultimate bliss. This is indicated by the hadith narrated by Ibn Umar who quotes the Prophet: 'Allah will draw a believer near and cover him. He will then say to him: "Do you remember this sin you have committed? Do you recall that sin you did?" He will say: "Yes, my Lord". When he has acknowledged his sins and thought that he is in total ruin, Allah will say to him: "These were sins I kept secret for you during your life, and today I am forgiving you these". He will be given his record of good deeds'.⁵⁵

Accountability is faced by those who committed some grave sins but believed in Allah's oneness. Allah may will to punish them in hell for their sins, but their ultimate destiny is to heaven. This is mentioned in the hadith narrated by A'ishah: 'The Prophet said: "Everyone who is held to account on the Day of Judgement will be in ruin". I said: Messenger of Allah, has not Allah said: "He who is given his record in his right hand will in time have a lenient reckoning." (84: 7–8). Allah's messenger said: "That takes the form of a statement, but anyone held to account on the Day of Judgement will be punished."⁵⁶

- b. For disbelievers: These are not accountable on the basis of balancing good deeds against evil ones, because their good deeds are forfeited. Allah says: 'We shall turn to whatever deeds they have done, and We shall transform it all into scattered dust.' (25: 23). They are shown their deeds and are asked to acknowledge them. The above-quoted hadith narrated by Ibn Umar continues: 'The disbelievers and the hypocrites will be shown to all creatures and it will be stated: "These are they who lied against their Lord. Allah's curse is on the wrongdoers."⁵⁷ (11: 18).

Six: Belief in recompense

This means the belief that heaven and hell are true and real. Heaven is the abode Allah has prepared for pious and Allah-fearing people. It contains both physical

55 Related by al-Bukhari, 2441; Muslim, 2768.

56 Related by al-Bukhari, 6537; Muslim, 2876.

57 Related by al-Bukhari, 2441; Muslim, 2768.

and spiritual blisses which no eye has ever seen, no ear has ever heard of and no mind could ever imagine. Hell is the abode Allah has prepared for the disbelievers; which is full of unimaginable physical and spiritual torments. Allah says:

‘We have given this Book to such of Our servants as We choose: among them are some who wrong their own souls, some follow a middle course; and some who, by Allah’s leave, are foremost in deeds of goodness. That is the greatest favour. Gardens of bliss will they enter, where they will be adorned with bracelets of gold and pearls, and where they will be clad in silk garments. They will say: “All praise is due to Allah, who has removed all sorrow from us. Our Lord is certainly much forgiving, most appreciative. It is He who, out of His bounty, has settled us in this abode of permanent life, where we shall endure neither toil nor fatigue”.

As for the disbelievers, the fire of hell awaits them. No term shall be determined for them so that they could die, nor shall its suffering be reduced for them. Thus We shall requite all disbelievers. There they will cry aloud: “Our Lord! Let us out and we will do good, not like what we did before”.

[They will be told]: “Have We not given you lives long enough for anyone who would be warned to take warning? And a warner had come to you. Taste it, then. Wrongdoers shall have none to support them.”. (35: 32–37).





Belief in the Divine Decree

*I*t is the absolute conviction that Allah, in His perfect knowledge, decreed all that will happen to all creatures, recorded it in the Preserved Tablet, let it occur by His will and let it come into existence through His power. He says: ‘We have created everything in due measure.’ (54: 49). ‘It is He Who has created all things and ordained them in due proportions.’ (25: 2).

Belief in the divine decree includes:

One: Belief in Allah’s knowledge

Allah’s knowledge is perfect, permanent and includes everything in total and detail, whether it pertains to His own action, such as determining the lifespan of every creature and its means of livelihood, or to His servants’ actions of obedience or disobedience of His commandments. Allah says: ‘He has knowledge of all things..’ (2: 29). ‘All this is laid down by the will of the Almighty, the All-Knowing.’ (6: 96) He knows who will obey Him and who will disobey Him, and He knows who will live to old age and who will have his life cut short.

Two: Belief that Allah has recorded all things on the Preserved Tablet

Allah says: ‘No incident can take place, either on earth or in yourselves, unless it be recorded in a decree before We bring it into being: that is easy for Allah.’ (57: 22). ‘It is He Who knows all that lies beyond the reach of human perception. Not an atom’s weight in the heavens or earth escapes Him; nor is there anything smaller or larger but is recorded in a clear book.’ (34: 3).

Abdullah ibn Amr reports: ‘I heard Allah’s messenger (peace be upon him) say: “Allah recorded the fortunes of all creatures fifty thousand years before He created the heavens and earth. His throne was established on water”.’⁵⁸ Ubadah ibn al-Samit reports: ‘I heard Allah’s messenger say: “The first thing Allah created was the pen. He said to it, ‘Write’. It said: ‘My Lord, what shall I write?’ He said: ‘Write the fortunes of everything until the Last Hour’.”’⁵⁹

58 Related by Muslim, 2653.

59 Related by Abu Dawud, 4700; al-Tirmidhi, 2155.

Allah combines both His knowledge and the recording of all things in one Qur'anic verse: 'Do you not know that Allah knows all that occurs in heaven as well as on earth? Indeed it is all in a record. All this is easy for Allah.' (22: 70).

Three: Belief that Allah's will is what occurs

Whatever Allah wills happens and whatever He does not will to happen shall never take place. Whatever He gives cannot be withheld and whatever He withholds cannot be given. Whatever He decrees cannot be stopped or prevented. Nothing that He does not want to happen can ever take place anywhere in His dominion. By His grace He guides whomever He wills and by His justice He lets go astray whomever He wills. There is no power that can repel His judgement.

Allah says: 'Had Allah so willed, those who succeeded them would not have fought against one another after the clear proofs had come to them. But they differed with one another: some of them accepted the faith and some rejected it. Yet had Allah so willed, they would not have fought one another. But Allah does whatever He wills.' (2: 253). 'To those of you whose will is to be upright, you cannot be thus except by the will of Allah, the Lord of all worlds.' (81: 28–29).

Four: Belief that Allah creates and brings into existence all that exists

Allah is the Creator and all else are creatures. All things: their entities, qualities and movements are created events. It is Allah Who creates them all and brings them into existence. Allah says: 'Allah is the Creator of everything, and of all things He is the Guardian.' (39: 62). 'It is Allah Who has created you and all you do.' (37: 96). This means that people's actions are also Allah's creatures, and at the same time people 'earn' their actions. As Allah says: 'Allah does not charge a soul with more than it can bear. In its favour shall be whatever good it does, and against it whatever evil it does.' (2: 286).

Five: Belief that Allah's will does not necessitate His love

Allah may will what He does not love and He may love what He does not will, but all this is for a specific purpose and is consistent with His infinite wisdom. He says: 'Had We so willed, We could indeed have imposed Our guidance on every human being. Instead, My word shall be fulfilled: "Most certainly will I fill

hell with jinn and humans all together.” (32: 13). ‘If you disbelieve, Allah has no need of you; nor is He pleased with disbelief by His servants. If you give thanks, He is pleased with you.’ (39: 7).

Six: Belief that there is no contradiction between Allah’s law and the divine decree

Allah says: ‘Surely your endeavours have divergent ends. As for him who gives and is Allah-fearing and believes in the truth of the ultimate good, We shall smooth the way to perfect ease. But as for him who is a miser and deems himself self-sufficient, and rejects the truth of the ultimate good, We shall smooth the way to affliction.’ (92: 4–10). Religion and its laws are an open book, but the divine decree is withheld. Allah recorded what people will do and what will happen to them, but He kept all this hidden from them. He then gave them His commandments and outlined His prohibitions. He prepared them and gave them what they need so they can do what He bids them and refrain from what He forbids. He allows for any reason that prevents them doing what He has bidden them. Therefore, no one may justify doing what Allah has forbidden or abandoning what He has bidden on the grounds that this is all decreed and that they cannot stop what Allah has decreed. Allah says:

Those who associate partners with Allah will say: “‘Had Allah so willed, neither we nor our fathers would have associated any partners with Him; nor would we have declared anything as forbidden’”. In like manner did those who have lived before them deny the truth, until they came to taste Our punishment. Say: “‘Have you any certain knowledge which you can put before us? You follow nothing but conjecture, and you do nothing but guess’”. Say: “‘With Allah alone rests the final evidence. Had He so willed, He would have guided you all aright.’” (6: 148-9).

First Allah makes clear that their claims are false and then He lets them taste His punishment. Had they had any argument on the basis of the divine decree, Allah would have neither punished them nor exposed the falsehood of their claims. Moreover, they had no knowledge of what Allah has recorded so they could not base their action on such knowledge. Their claims are all baseless, indeed the final evidence supports Allah’s argument.

Two groups have erred in their attitude to divine decree. These are:

- a. Al-Qadariyyah, who are people who exaggerate people's actions, denying the divine decree. These are two categories:
 - i. Extremists. This was the earlier group which appeared towards the latter part of the Prophet's companions' generation. They claimed that matters just exist as they happen and deny Allah's knowledge, recording, will and creation. Several of the Prophet's companions, such as Ibn Abbas and Ibn Umar refuted their arguments.
 - ii. Moderates. These are al-Mu'tazilah, who acknowledge Allah's prior knowledge and recording but deny the will and creation. They claim that a person creates his own actions.
- b. Al-Jabriyyah, who exaggerate Allah's action to the extent that they deny any role for any person in his actions and ability. They consider that man's actions are involuntary, just as one shivers when he is cold. They deny that Allah's actions are based on His wisdom and definite purpose. There are also two categories of these:
 - i. Extremists. These are the disbeliever Sufis who claim that they witness the universal truth, justifying whatever they wish to do and claiming that it occurs according to Allah's decree. Addressing Allah, one of their prominent poets said: 'I am now doing what You chose for me. As such, whatever I do is in obedience of You'.
 - ii. Moderates. These are the Ash'ariyyah who subscribe to the 'earning' theory. They acknowledge that man has an ability, but it has no effect.

Both groups are wrong as evidence from religious texts and real life clearly shows:

The first group, al-Qadariyyah, which denies divine decree in all four of the aspects we have mentioned: knowledge, recording, will and creation, come up against clear religious texts confirming all four aspects. Moreover, in real life a person aims to do something but then he is prevented from doing it.

The second group, al-Jabriyyah, which exaggerates the role of divine decree, come up against religious texts that confirm man's will and action. Moreover, every one of us distinguishes between what one does as a matter of choice and what happens without one's interference.

Moreover, there are numerous texts confirming that Allah's actions are done for a purpose and in line with His wisdom.



The Qur'an

*T*he Qur'an is Allah's word. He says: 'If any of the idolaters seeks asylum with you, grant him protection so that he may hear the word of Allah and then convey him to his place of safety. That is because the idolaters are people who lack knowledge.' (9: 6). When the Prophet addressed Arab tribes during the pilgrimage, requesting their support, he said to them: 'Would anyone take me to his own people. The Quraysh have prevented me from delivering my Lord's words'.⁶⁰

This means that the Qur'an, its letters, words and meanings, is all Allah's word. It is unlike the speech of any creatures and is bestowed from on high, not created. Allah initially narrated it and inspired Gabriel, the Holy Spirit, then imparted it to Muhammad's heart. The Prophet received it in parts and recited it to people. As Allah says: 'We have divided the Qur'an into parts so that you may recite it to people with deliberation. We have indeed bestowed it from on high, step by step.' (17: 106).

When people recite the Qur'an, write it down in books, or memorise it, it retains its status as truly being Allah's word. In truth, words are attributed to the one who says them first, not to the one who quotes them. Recitation is different from what is being recited, and writing is different from what is written, just as memorisation is different from what is memorised. The same applies to all deeds. The deed is that of the reciter, writer or memoriser, but the words are Allah's own. He says:

"Say: 'The Holy Spirit has brought it down from your Lord in truth, so as to strengthen the believers, and to provide guidance and good news to those who surrender themselves to Allah'. We know fully well that they say: 'It is but a man that teaches him [all] this'. But the man to whom they so maliciously allude speaks a foreign tongue, while this is Arabic speech, pure and clear.'" (16: 102–103).

Allah has ruled that anyone who alleges that the Qur'an is the word of a human being is a disbeliever. He warns such people of punishment in hell. He says: 'I will cast him into the scorching Fire.' (74: 26).

⁶⁰ Related by Ahmad, 15192; Abu Dawud, 4734; al-Tirmidhi, 2925; al-Nasa'i in *Al-Sunan al-Kubra*, 7680; Ibn Majah, 201.

Two groups are in manifest error in this regard. These are:

- a. Al-Jahmiyyah and al-Mu‘tazilah, who deny Allah’s attributes and His speech. They allege that when we say ‘Allah’s word’, we are attributing a creature to its creator. This is just like when we say Allah’s servant, or Allah’s house, or Allah’s she-camel. It is unlike attributing an adjective to what it qualifies.

To refute this argument we say that what is attributed to Allah is of two types: i) it has its own separate entity, and this would be like attributing a creature to its creator; and ii) it is a quality, and it is inconceivable that it would stand on its own: such as life, hearing, seeing, knowledge and speech. As such, it is a case of attributing a quality to the one who has it. Moreover, their claims are in conflict with the Qur’an, the Sunnah and the unanimity of scholars.

- b. Al-Kullabiyyah, al-Ash‘aris and al-Maturidis. These groups confirm that Allah’s word refers to the meaning which has always existed with Allah. As for the letters and sounds, these are created to express or emulate that meaning, which is not renewed and is independent of Allah’s will. Thus, they limit the ‘word’ to the meaning, but not the letters and sounds. They consider what Adam and Eve heard in heaven and what Moses heard when he was by the Tree as something created, not the actual words of Allah.

To refute their argument we say that speech always refers to both aspects together. What a person speaks to himself in his conscience it is not called speech in the real sense of the word. Besides, what they say is in conflict with the Qur’an, the sunnah and the unanimity of scholars.





Seeing Allah

An aspect of belief in Allah and the Last Day is that the believers will see their Lord on the Day of Judgement, with their own eyes, even though they do not encompass Him with their sight. They will see Him at two points: The first will be at the time of reckoning and the second will be after they have been admitted into heaven.

Allah says: ‘Some faces will on that day be radiant with happiness, looking towards their Lord.’ (75: 22–23). ‘They recline upon their couches and look [around them].’ (83: 35). Allah also says: ‘For those who do good there is a good reward, and more besides.’ (10: 26). The Prophet explained that the expression ‘more besides’ means that believers will be looking at Allah’s face.⁶¹ When he looked at the full moon, the Prophet said to his companions: ‘You shall see your Lord like you see this moon. You shall not be obstructed from seeing Him’.⁶²

Two groups err in this respect. They are:

a. Those who deny Allah’s attributes: al-Jahmiyyah, al-Mu‘tazilah and whoever agrees with them such as the Shia and al-Ibadiyyah. These deny that the believers will see their Lord, citing in support what Allah said to Moses: ‘You shall not see Me.’ (7: 143). They also cite the verse that says: ‘No power of vision can encompass Him.’ (6: 103).

To refute their argument we say that Allah’s words to Moses, ‘You shall not see Me’, refer to this present life, as Moses had requested, and this negation is not necessarily absolute. Moreover, the other verse negates ‘encompassing Him’, but this does not mean a negation of seeing. It is possible that we see something without encompassing it, as we see the sun, the moon, a mountain, etc. Moreover, there are several Qur’anic and hadith texts that confirm that believers will see their Lord.

b. The superstitious Sufis and other deviant groups. These exaggerate the possibility of seeing Allah and allege that it takes place in this life, as their leaders experience it, and narrate fabricated hadiths to confirm their views. However, the Prophet says: ‘Learn that you shall not see your Lord until after you have died’.⁶³

61 Related by Muslim, 181.

62 Related by al-Bukhari, 554; Muslim, 633.

63 Related by Ahmad, 22864, al-Nasa’i in *Al-Sunan al-Kubra*, 7716; al-Ajiri in *Al-Shariah* [his text], 881; Ibn Majah, 4077.

The Nature of Faith [*iman*]

1. To believe, or to have faith [*iman*], involves verbal words, mental actions, speech and physical actions. The words are mental and verbal and the actions involve the mind, the tongue and the organs of the body.

- a. Mental words mean belief, conviction and acceptance.
- b. Verbal words mean to state the declaration of belief in Allah's oneness and Muhammad's message.
- c. Mental actions include intent and will, such as the love and fear of Allah, as well as placing one's hope and trust in Him.
- d. The tongue's action refers to what one says of glorifying Allah, supplication and recitation of the Qur'an.
- e. The action of the body's organs include movement as one performs physical worship.

Allah says: 'True believers are only those whose hearts are filled with awe whenever Allah is mentioned, and whose faith is strengthened whenever His revelations are recited to them. In their Lord do they place their trust. They attend regularly to their prayers and spend in charity some of what We have provided them with. It is those who are truly believers. They shall be given high ranks with their Lord, and forgiveness of sins and generous provisions.' (8: 2-4). 'True believers are only those who have believed in Allah and His messenger, and never then entertained any doubt, and who strive hard in Allah's cause with their possessions and their lives. Those are the ones who are true to their word.' (49: 15). The Prophet says: 'Faith [*iman*] has some-and-seventy or some-and-sixty branches. The best of these is the statement, "there is no deity other than Allah", and the lowest is to remove harmful objects from people's way. Modesty is a branch of faith.'⁶⁴

2. When faith is mentioned separately, it is synonymous with Islam being mentioned separately. Each of these words means the Islamic faith in total. When they are mentioned together, faith refers to mental conviction and Islam refers to physical action. Thus, every believer is a Muslim but not every Muslim is a believer. Allah says: 'The Bedouins say: "We have attained to faith." Say [to them]: "Be-

⁶⁴ Related by al-Bukhari, 9; Muslim [his text], 35.

lievers you are not. Rather say, ‘We have submitted ourselves’”, for true faith has not entered your hearts. But if you truly pay heed to Allah and His messenger, He will let nothing of your deeds go to waste. Allah is indeed much forgiving, ever merciful.” (49: 14).

3. Faith [*iman*] may increase or decrease. It increases with better knowledge of Allah, contemplation of His universal signs, reflection on the Qur’an, doing what He orders and refraining from what He prohibits. It decreases with the opposites of these, such as ignorance about Allah, ignoring His universal signs and the Qur’an, neglecting His orders and committing what He prohibits. Allah says: ‘Whenever His revelations are recited to them, their faith is increased.’ (8: 2). ‘It certainly strengthens the believers in their faith, and so they rejoice.’ (9: 124). ‘It is He Who sent down tranquillity into the hearts of the believers, so that they may grow more firm in their faith.’ (48: 4).

4. Some aspects of faith are more important than others, as the Prophet says: ‘Faith [*iman*] has some-and-seventy or some-and-sixty branches. The best of these is the statement, “there is no deity other than Allah”, and the lowest is to remove harmful objects from people’s way. Modesty is a branch of faith’.⁶⁵

5. The believers are of different ranks, with some more perfect in their faith than others, as Allah says: ‘We have given this Book to such of Our servants as We choose: among them are some who wrong their own souls, some who follow a middle course; and some who, by Allah’s leave, are foremost in deeds of goodness. That is the greatest favour.’ (35: 32). The Prophet says: ‘The most perfect of believers in their faith are the ones with the best manners’.⁶⁶

A person who makes the declaration of faith, in both its parts and believing in what it implies, commits himself to its requirements and meets the essentials of faith. One who performs the duties of faith and refrains from what is prohibited has reached the obligatory level of faith, while he who performs both compulsory and extra duties of faith and refrains from both prohibited and unliked acts has reached the complete level of faith.

65 Related by al-Bukhari, 9; Muslim [his text], 35.

66 Related by Ahmad, 7402; Abu Dawud, 4682; al-Tirmidhi, 1162.

6. Adding a phrase of exception to faith, as in the case of one saying, ‘I am a believer, Allah willing’, may reveal one of three situations:

- i. The person saying it is in some doubt about faith. In this case the exception is prohibited and expresses disbelief, because faith requires firm decision.
- ii. A person says this in order to guard against self-praise and pretence to complete or perfect iman. In this case, the exception is a duty.
- iii. A person says it merely as a blessed expression that everything is subject to Allah’s will. In this case, the exception is permissible.

7. The status of faith [iman] is not negated by committing sins, even the major ones. Faith remains but is deficient. A person who commits a major sin is a believer but his faith is deficient, and he is a transgressor because of what he has committed. He is not ruled as a disbeliever in this present life, and he is not punished in hell forever. He is subject to Allah’s will. Allah may bestow His grace on him and pardon him, admitting him into heaven, or He may punish him as suits his sins and eventually admit him into heaven. Alternatively, his punishment may be less than his sin, and he is discharged from hell through the intercession of those Allah allows to intercede, or by Allah’s mercy. Allah says: ‘For a certainty, Allah does not forgive that partners are associated with Him. He forgives any lesser sin to whomever He wills. He who associates partners with Allah contrives an awesome sin indeed.’ (4: 48). The Prophet says: ‘The people of heaven will enter heaven, and the people of the Fire enter the Fire. Allah will then say: “Bring out whoever has a mustard seed’s weight of faith in their hearts”. They will be brought out blackened and placed in the river of life’.⁶⁷ He also says: ‘Then will be released from the Fire everyone who said “There is no deity other than Allah” if he has the weight of a barley grain of goodness in his heart; and everyone will be released from the Fire who said: “There is no deity other than Allah” if he has the weight of a wheat grain of goodness in his heart; and everyone will be released from the Fire who said: “There is no deity other than Allah” if he has an atom’s weight of goodness in his heart’.⁶⁸ Another version also related by al-Bukhari substitutes ‘of faith’ for ‘of goodness’ in all three cases.

Two groups have erred in respect of this issue:

- a. The “warning upholders” who maintain that Allah’s punishment will be en-

67 Related by al-Bukhari, 22.

68 Related by al-Bukhari, 44.

forced and there will be no intercession for those who committed major sins even though they believe in Allah's oneness. These are of two types:

- i. Al-Khawarij, who say that the one who commits a major sin removes himself from faith and becomes a disbeliever. As such, he is a disbeliever in this life and stays in hell forever.
- ii. Al-Mu'tazilah, who say that the one who commits a major sin removes himself from faith but does not become a disbeliever. He is in a position in-between, neither a believer nor a disbeliever, yet he stays in hell forever.

In answer to these views we may say:

First, Allah describes a person who commits a major sin in this life as a believer and retains his status of brotherhood with other believers. He says: 'Believers, just retribution is prescribed for you in cases of killing: a free man for a free man, a slave for a slave, and a female for a female. If something [of his guilt] is remitted to a person by his brother, this shall be pursued with fairness, and restitution to his fellow-man shall be made in a goodly manner.' (2: 178). In the previous verse, Allah describes the killer as a brother of the one he has killed. He also says: 'If two groups of believers fall to fighting, make peace between them. But then, if one of the two goes on acting wrongfully towards the other, fight against the one that acts wrongfully until it reverts to Allah's commandment; and if they revert, make peace between them with justice, and deal equitably with them. Indeed, Allah loves those who act equitably. All believers are but brothers. Hence, make peace between your two brothers, and remain Allah-fearing, so that you may receive [Allah's] mercy.' (49: 9–10). In these verses, Allah describes the two warring groups as believers and confirms that they are brethren in faith.

Secondly, Allah forgives any sins less than associating partners with Him. He discharges from Hell anyone who has the equivalent of a mustard seed of faith in his heart, as several *hadiths* confirm..

- b. Al-Murji'ah, who say that actions are not included in the definition and reality of faith. In their own definition of faith, they are of different types:
 - i. Al-Jahmiyyah: To them, faith means only mental belief or mental knowledge. When one has such faith, no sin is of any harm, just like no good action is of any use to a disbeliever.
 - ii. Al-Karramiyyah: To them, faith is merely a verbal statement.

iii. Scholars who belong to this group and define faith as mental conviction and a verbal statement only. Actions are not included in faith but they are part of its results.

In reply to al-Murji'ah we may say: i) Allah described action as faith [iman]. In reference to those Muslims who offered their prayers facing Jerusalem and died before the order to turn towards Makkah, He says: 'Allah would never have let your faith be in vain.' (2: 143). In this statement, 'your faith' means 'your prayer'. ii) The Prophet describes a person who commits a physical major sin as not having absolute faith. He says: 'An adulterer is not a believer when he is committing adultery; a thief is not a believer when he is stealing; a drunk is not a believer when he drinks intoxicants. Nor is a person a believer when he robs something of value which people highly appreciate'.⁶⁹

The flaw in both groups' ideas is that they consider faith as one thing which either exists in full or does not exist at all. Al-Murji'ah confirm it by merely stating that one is a believer. The statement may be mental, or verbal or both. Thus they consider a believer to be anyone who makes such a statement even though he does not do any action required by faith, and as such they neglect important aspects of faith. The other erring group negate faith when a person commits any major sin. As such, they are too rigid. They share the same premise but arrive at different conclusions.



⁶⁹ Related by al-Bukhari, 2475; Muslim, 57.



Leadership and Community

*M*uslims are a single nation. Their affairs are not set right and their mission cannot be fulfilled unless certain requirements are met.

One: The pledge of allegiance

The Prophet says: ‘Whoever dies without having given a pledge of allegiance, dies in an un-Islamic condition’.⁷⁰

Two: Obedience towards leaders in what is reasonable

This includes participation in the pilgrimage, Friday prayers and Eid prayers with the rulers regardless if they are righteous or sinners. It further includes giving them sincere advice, and referring any dispute to Allah’s book and the Prophet’s Sunnah. Allah says: ‘Believers, obey Allah and obey the Messenger and those from among you who have been entrusted with authority. If you are in dispute over anything, refer it to Allah and the Messenger, if you truly believe in Allah and the Last Day. This is the best [for you], and most suitable for final determination.’ (4: 59). The Prophet says: ‘Every Muslim should listen and obey, in whatever he likes or dislikes, unless he is bidden to commit an act of disobedience of Allah. If he is bidden that then he neither listens nor obeys’.⁷¹ ‘Whoever discards his duty of obedience will meet Allah on the Day of Judgement having no argument to justify himself’.⁷²

Three: Prohibition of rebellion

This is true even if the ruler is unjust. However, the prohibition does not apply when the ruler commits clear disbelief that is confirmed with irrefutable evidence. This is based on the *hadith* narrated by Ubadah ibn al-Samit: ‘The Prophet called us and we gave him our pledges. He stipulated in our pledges certain things including that “we listen and obey, when we are willing or unwilling, in comfortable or straitened circumstances, and in preference to ourselves.” We must not try to replace rulers, unless we see clear disbelief that is proven with irrefutable evidence from Allah’. The Prophet also said to his companions: ‘After I am gone, you shall witness selfishness and other matters that you disapprove of’. They asked: ‘What

⁷⁰ Related by Muslim, 1851.

⁷¹ Related by al-Bukhari, 7144; Muslim, 1839.

⁷² Related by Muslim, 1851.

do you command us to do then, Messenger of Allah?’⁷³ He said: ‘Give them what is rightfully due to them, and pray to Allah to give you your rights’.⁷⁴

This means that rebellion against rulers is unlawful unless a number of strict conditions are met:

- a. Certainty that the rulers have gone to disbelief, based on seeing with one’s own eyes or knowing with absolute certainty. The Prophet said: ‘unless you see ...’ This excludes knowledge based on reports.
- b. It must be a clear-cut case of disbelief. Transgression is not sufficient to justify revolt.
- c. It must be obvious, which means that it is publicly known. If the disbelief is hidden, revolt is not justified.
- d. There must be confirmation of disbelief with irrefutable evidence. The Prophet clearly mentions the need for such irrefutable evidence and this excludes any case of doubt or controversy.
- e. Sufficient capabilities. Revolt is not permissible in case of weakness, even if the abovementioned conditions are all met. To revolt in such a situation may lead to the annihilation of Muslims. Allah says: ‘Are you not aware of those who have been told, “Hold back your hands [from fighting], and attend regularly to prayer, and pay your zakat?” When, at length, the order for fighting was issued to them, some of them stood in awe of men as one should stand in awe of Allah – or in even greater awe.’ (4: 77). Thus, the believers were commanded to remain peaceful when they were weak, but when they had the power, fighting was ordered.



73 Related by al-Bukhari, 7055 and 7056; Muslim, 1709 and 4771.

74 Related by al-Bukhari, 7052; Muslim, 1843.



The Prophet's Companions

A companion of the Prophet is a person who physically met Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), believed in him and died as a believer. The Prophet's companions (may Allah be pleased with them all) are the best of mankind after the prophets and are the best generation of the Muslim community. As the Prophet says: 'The best of mankind is my generation'.⁷⁵ 'The best of my community are my generation'.⁷⁶

All of them were people of high integrity, because Allah chose them to be the companions of His Prophet. He commended them, was pleased with them, accepted their repentance of their sins, described them in the most honourable terms and promised them the best reward. Allah says:

"Muhammad is Allah's Messenger; and those who are with him are firm and unyielding towards the disbelievers, full of mercy towards one another. You can see them bowing down, prostrating in prayer, seeking favour with Allah and His good pleasure. They bear on their faces the marks of their prostrations. This is how they are pictured in the Torah. And in the Gospels, they are like a seed that brings forth its shoot, strengthens it, grows thick and stands firm on its stem, delighting the sowers. Through them Allah will enrage the unbelievers. To those of them who believe and do righteous deeds Allah has promised forgiveness and a rich reward." (48: 29).

Nevertheless, they are of different ranks, both as communities and as individuals.

Community differences include:

One: The Muhajirin are higher in rank than the Ansar

This is because the Muhajirin combined immigration from their homeland with supporting the Prophet. Moreover, they were mentioned by Allah in the Qur'an before the Ansar. Allah says:

"[Such gains are for] the poor migrants who have been driven out of their homes and possessions, seeking Allah's favour and His acceptance, and who help Allah and His

⁷⁵ Related by al-Bukhari, 2652; Muslim, 2533.

⁷⁶ Related by al-Bukhari, 3650; Muslim, 2535.

Messenger. These are the ones who are true. And to those who were already firmly established in the Home and in faith, those who love the ones that seek refuge with them and harbour no desire in their hearts for whatever the others may have been given. They give them preference over themselves, even though they are in want. Those who are saved from their own greed are truly successful.”⁷⁷ (59: 8–9)

“As for the first to lead the way, of the Muhajirin and the Ansar, as well as those who follow them in [the way of] righteousness, Allah is well-pleased with them, and well-pleased are they with Him. He has prepared for them gardens through which running waters flow, where they shall abide forever. That is the supreme triumph.” (9: 100).

“Allah has assuredly turned in His mercy to the Prophet, the Muhajirin and the Ansar, who followed him in the hour of hardship, when the hearts of a group of them had almost faltered. Then again He turned to them in mercy; for He is compassionate towards them, ever-merciful.” (9: 117).

Two: The ones who spent money and fought for Islam before the Al-Hudaybiyah peace treaty are of a higher rank than those who did so afterwards

Allah says: ‘Those of you who gave and fought [for Allah’s cause] before the victory are not like others: they are higher in rank than those who gave and fought afterwards, although Allah has promised the ultimate good to all of them. Allah is well aware of all that you do.’ (57: 10).

Three: The people of Badr

Those who took part in the Battle of Badr have a special distinction. In the case of Hatib ibn Balta[ah, the Prophet said to Umar: ‘He [Hatib] took part in Badr. How would you tell: Allah might have looked at the people of Badr and said: “Do as you like; I have forgiven you all?”’⁷⁸

Four: Those who gave the al-Ridwan pledge

Allah says: ‘Allah was indeed well pleased with the believers when they pledged their allegiance to you under the tree. He knew what was in their hearts and so He sent down tranquillity upon them, and rewarded them with a speedy victory.’ (48:

⁷⁷ The first verse refers to the migrants, i.e. the Muhajirin, while the second speaks of the Ansar who gave the Prophet their full support.

⁷⁸ Related by al-Bukhari, 3007; Muslim, 2494.

18). The Prophet said: 'None of the people who gave their pledges under the tree will enter Hell, Allah willing'.⁷⁹

Individual distinction applies as follows:

One: The four rightly-guided Caliphs

The highest distinction in the Muslim community goes to Abu Bakr, then to Umar ibn al-Khattab. This is universally agreed by the Sunni people. It is authentically reported in more than 80 versions that Ali said, as he was speaking from the platform in the main mosque in Kufah: 'The best people in the Muslim community after the Prophet were Abu Bakr then Umar'. Needless to say, Ali would not have said this without firm evidence.⁸⁰

Next comes Uthman ibn Affan. Al-Bukhari relates a *hadith* narrated by Abdullah ibn Umar: 'We used to draw comparisons between people during the Prophet's time. We gave the best positions to Abu Bakr, then Umar, then Uthman'.⁸¹ In another version, he adds: 'This was reported to the Prophet and he did not object'.⁸² Sufyan al-Thawri said: 'Whoever puts Ali ahead of Abu Bakr and Umar shows no respect to the Muhajirin and the Ansar',⁸³ because they chose Abu Bakr and Umar to be Caliphs first. Next comes Ali ibn Abi Talib. Thus, their ranking is the same as the order in which they became Caliphs.

Two: The ones promised entry into heaven

These were the four rightly-guided Caliphs, Abd al-Rahman ibn Awf, Saad ibn Abi Waqqas, Talhah ibn Ubaydillah, al-Zubayr ibn al-Awwam, Abu Ubaydah ibn al-Jarrah and Saeed ibn Zayd. May Allah be pleased with them all.⁸⁴ The Prophet stated that these ten will be in heaven. Other texts indicate that heaven was assured

79 Related by Muslim, 2496.

80 Related by Ahmad, 836; Ibn Abi Asim in *Al-Sunnah*, 1201, with al-Albani grading it as authentic.

81 Related by al-Bukhari, 3655.

82 Related by Ibn Abi Asim in *Al-Sunnah*, 1193.

83 Related by Ibn Maeen in *Al-Tarikh*, 885; al-Khallal in *Al-Sunnah*, 528; al-Khatib al-Baghdadi in *Tarikh Baghdad*, vol. 5, p. 50 with a different wording: 'Whoever puts Ali ahead of Uthman is in disrespect of twelve thousand people with whom the Prophet was pleased until he died. They all pledged allegiance to Uthman'.

84 Related by Ahmad, 1675 and 1631; al-Tirmidhi, 3747 and 3748; al-Nasa'i in *Al-Sunan al-Kubra*, 8138 and 8162; Abu Dawud, 4649; Ibn Majah, 133.

to Bilal,⁸⁵ Thabit ibn Qays⁸⁶ and Abdullah ibn Sallam.⁸⁷

Three: Members of the Prophet's household

These are five familial branches who are forbidden to take charity. These are the descendants of Ali, Ja'far, Aqil, the sons of Abu Talib, and the descendants of al-Abbas and al-Harith ibn Abd al-Muttalib. The Prophet says: 'Allah, the Mighty, the Exalted, chose Kinanah out of the Ismail's descendants, and from Kinanah He chose the Quraysh. He then chose the Hashimites from among the Quraysh and chose me out of the Hashimites'.⁸⁸ 'I remind you to fear Allah in [your attitude to] my household. I remind you to fear Allah in [your attitude to] my household'.⁸⁹ Al-Abbas ibn Abd al-Muttalib complained to him that some of the people of Quraysh distanced themselves from the Hashimites. He said to him: 'By Allah, no one will have faith unless he loves you on account of your being my relatives'.⁹⁰

Needless to say, the Prophet's honourable wives belonged to his household. Allah says: 'Allah only wants to remove all that is loathsome from you, you members of the [Prophet's] household, and to purify you fully.' (33: 33). Allah chose them for His messenger and He made them his wives in this present life and in the life to come, and He gave them the title 'Mothers of the Believers'. The most distinguished among them were Khadijah, then A'ishah bint Abu Bakr. The rest were Sawdah bint Zimaah, Hafsa bint Umar, Umm Salamah, Umm Habibah bint Abu Sufyan, Safiyyah bint Huyay, Zaynab bint Jahsh, Juwayriyyah, Maymunah and Zaynab bint Khuzaymah. May Allah be pleased with them all.

Our duty towards the Prophet's companions, irrespective of their grades of distinction is as follows:

- a. To love and be loyal to them, to pray that Allah may be pleased with them and forgive them their sins, and to praise them as individuals and community. Allah says: 'The believers, men and women, are friends to one another.' (9: 71). 'Those who come after them pray: "Our Lord! Forgive us and forgive

85 Al-Bukhari, 1149; Muslim, 2457 and 2458.

86 Related by al-Bukhari, 3613; Muslim, 119.

87 Related by al-Bukhari, 3812; Muslim, 2483.

88 Related by Muslim, 2276.

89 Related by Muslim, 2408.

90 Related by Ahmad, 1777.

our brethren who preceded us in faith. Leave no malice in our hearts towards those who believe. Lord, You are compassionate, ever merciful.’ (59: 10). The Prophet says: ‘The mark of faith is to love the Ansar, and the mark of hypocrisy is to hate the Ansar’.⁹¹ Ali said: ‘By Him who splits the seed and creates man it is the unlettered Prophet’s promise to me that “None but a believer loves me and none but a hypocrite hates me”’.⁹²

- b. To keep our hearts free of any ill-feeling towards them and to refrain from any verbal abuse to any of them. Allah says: ‘[Our Lord], leave no malice in our hearts towards those who believe. Lord, You are compassionate, ever merciful.’ (59: 10). The Prophet says: ‘Do not revile my companions. By Him who holds my soul in His hand, if any of you spends [for Allah’s cause] the like of Mount Uhud in gold, he would not attain the equivalent of the fill of the cupped hands of any one of them, or even half of that’.⁹³
- c. To refrain from making any judgement about their differences, giving them every benefit of good intention and stating that they all acted to the best of their discretion. As such, they were either right and they would earn double reward, or wrong and they would earn a single reward. They have done great acts in the service of Islam and exerted their best efforts. All this should earn them the forgiveness of their sins, if any.
- d. To dissociate ourselves from the practice of the Shia, who exaggerate the high status of the members of the Prophet’s household and go too far in hating and reviling the Prophet’s other companions. Also to dissociate ourselves from the practice of others who dislike and criticise members of the Prophet’s household.



91 Related by al-Bukhari, 17.

92 Related by Muslim, 78.

93 Related by al-Bukhari, 3673; Muslim, 2540.



Allah's Friends

All believers are Allah's friends and He is their patron. He says: 'Allah is the patron of the believers.' (2: 257). He grants the highest status to those of them who are most Allah-fearing: 'Truly, the noblest of you in the sight of Allah is the most genuinely Allah-fearing.' (49: 13). Whoever is Allah-fearing is a friend of Allah. This close relationship is from the believer loving and obeying Allah and by Allah's love and kindness to the believers.

One: Allah's friend

Every Allah-fearing believer is close to Allah. He says: 'For certain, those who are close to Allah have nothing to fear, nor shall they grieve; for they do believe and remain Allah-fearing.' (10: 62–63). Their standing in this close relationship is dependent on their different grades in faith and in their Allah-fearing, not on any claim or ancestry. Allah says: 'Truly, the noblest of you in the sight of Allah is the one who is most genuinely Allah-fearing. Allah is all-knowing, all-aware.' (49: 13).

Two: Signs of honour

These are unusual or miraculous events that Allah allows to be performed by any one of His good servants, as a sign of honour and in confirmation of the truth of the prophet that person followed. There are two types of signs:

- a. Knowledge, including granting unattainable information and inspiration.
- b. Ability and influence.

Such signs of honour happened in olden days to those who were close to Allah, and to a number of the Prophet's companions and the generation that followed them. They may continue to happen to people in the Muslim community in the present or in any future generation.

Sources of Rules and Evidence

One: The main sources

The Qur'an, the Sunnah and the properly achieved unanimity of scholars are the basic sources of Islamic beliefs, laws and rulings, as also are manners and behaviour. These sources may not be contradicted by anyone's views, analogy, preference, philosophy or order, regardless of their position or status.

Two: How to understand the Qur'an and the Sunnah

The proper method of understanding them is the one followed by the early Muslims, the Muhajirin and the Ansar, and those who did well in following them. Other invented methods followed by theologians and Sufis must be abandoned. Allah says: 'As for him who, after guidance has been plainly conveyed to him, puts himself in contention with Allah's Messenger and follows a path other than that of the believers – him shall We leave to that which he himself has chosen, and shall cause him to endure hell. How evil a journey's end.' (4: 115).

Three: Sound logic

Sound reasoning that is not influenced by doubt or desire cannot be in conflict with authentic religious texts that are free of flaws and defects in their reporting. Texts may appear paradoxical to some people, but they never prove to be unacceptable to sound reasoning. When anyone claims to find contradiction between religious texts and sound reasoning, the fault is with his reasoning. He must give preference to the text, not to his logic.

Four: Deviation

This refers to any invented idea or practice in religion. The Prophet says: 'Whoever invents something in this matter of ours that does not belong to it will have it rejected'.⁹⁴ Another version is more emphatic: 'Whoever does a deed that is not in agreement with our matter will have it rejected'.⁹⁵ There are several different types of deviation:

- a. In faith: such as the beliefs of the Shia, al-Khawarij, al-Qadariyyah and al-Murji'ah.
- b. Practical: such as remaining celibate in order to devote oneself to worship, or to follow invented methods of worship.
- c. CComplete invention: such as commemorating the birthdays of devout persons or inventing glorifications of Allah.
- d. Supplementary: practices that are added to acts of worship relating to their causes, type, form, quantity, time or place.
- e. Major: such as any type of associating partners with Allah.
- f. Minor: such as group glorification of Allah.
- g. Deviation that takes a person into disbelief: such as negating Allah's attributes.
- h. Deviation that leads to transgression: such as listening to what is forbidden.

⁹⁴ Related by al-Bukhari, 2697; Muslim, 1718.

⁹⁵ Related by al-Bukhari, before *hadith* number 2142 and 7350; Muslim, 1718.

Complements to Faith

One: Enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong

Allah says: ‘Let there become of you a nation who invite to all that is good, enjoin the doing of what is right and forbid what is wrong. Such are they who shall prosper.’ (3: 104). Abu Saeed al-Khudri said: ‘I heard Allah’s messenger (peace be upon him) say: “Whoever of you sees a wrongful action should change it with his hand; and if is unable to do so, then with his tongue; and if he is unable to do that, then with his heart. This [last one] is the weakest degree of faith”.’

This should be based on clear prior knowledge, a gentle approach and patient acceptance of any adverse consequences.

Two: Commitment to unity and steering away from disunity

Allah says: ‘Hold fast, all of you together, to the bond with Allah and do not be disunited. And remember the blessings Allah has bestowed on you: how, when you were enemies [to one another.] He united your hearts and, by His grace, you have become brothers; and how, when you were on the brink of an abyss of fire, He saved you from it. Thus Allah makes clear His revelations to you, so that you may be rightly guided. Let there become of you a nation who invite to all that is good, enjoin the doing of what is right and forbid what is wrong. Such are they who shall prosper. Do not follow the example of those who became divided and fell into conflict with one another after clear proofs had come to them. For these there will be grievous suffering.’ (3: 103–105). ‘Steadfastly uphold the faith and do not divide into factions.’ (42: 13). The Prophet says: ‘To one another, believers are like a solid building: each part strengthens the rest’.⁹⁶ As he said this, he crossed his fingers. He also says: ‘In their love, compassion and mutual sympathy, believers are like one body. When any part of it suffers a complaint, the rest of the body shares in sleeplessness and fever’.⁹⁷

Three: Fine morality and kind actions

The first includes perseverance, generosity, bravery, forbearance, forgiveness, and humility, etc. and steering away from their opposites. Kind actions include being dutiful to parents, showing kindness to relatives, being a good neighbour, and

⁹⁶ Related by al-Bukhari, [his text] 2446; Muslim, 2585.

⁹⁷ Related by Muslim, 2586.

kindness to orphans, poor people and travellers in need. Allah says: ‘Make due allowance for man’s nature, and enjoin the doing of what is right; and turn away from those who choose to remain ignorant.’ (7: 199).

Abu al-Darda’ reports that the Prophet said: ‘Nothing is heavier in Allah’s scales than good manners’.⁹⁸ Abu Hurayrah said:

Allah’s messenger (peace be upon him) said: ‘Whoever removes a worldly grief from a believer, Allah will remove from him one of the griefs of the Day of Judgement. Whoever alleviates the lot of a needy person, Allah will alleviate his lot in this world and the next. Whoever shields a Muslim, Allah will shield him in this life and in the life to come. Allah will aid a servant of His so long as such a servant aids his brother. Whoever follows a path in pursuit of knowledge, Allah will provide for him an easy path to Paradise. Whenever people gather together in one of Allah’s houses, reciting Allah’s book and studying it together, [Allah’s] grace will envelop them, the angels will surround them and Allah will make a mention of them to those who are with Him. Whoever is slowed down [on the way to Paradise] by his actions will not be hastened forward by his lineage’.⁹⁹



98 Related by Abu Dawud [his text], 4799; al-Tirmidhi, 2002 and 2003. Al-Tirmidhi’s version adds: ‘The one with good manners also attains the grade of one who frequently offers voluntary fasting and prayers’.

99 Related by Muslim, 2699.



Religion and Methodology

Divine religion is one, which in essence is self-surrender to Allah. In Arabic, self-surrender means Islam. Allah says: ‘The only true faith acceptable to Allah is [man’s] self-surrender to Him.’ (3: 19). Self-surrender is the religion Allah revealed for both old and later nations. Allah says: ‘Indeed, it is We Who revealed the Torah, containing guidance and light. By it did the prophets, who had surrendered themselves to Allah, judge among the Jews ...’ (5: 44). This is Islam in its general meaning: total self-surrender to Allah, which means believing in His oneness, submission to Him by doing His bidding and dissociating oneself from any aspect of attributing partners to Him.

In its restricted meaning, Islam refers to the message Allah gave to His Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), setting forth Allah’s guidance and true faith. It comprises the right beliefs, fair laws, good action and proper morality. Allah has willed Islam to abrogate all past religions. As such, He accepts none other than Islam. He says: ‘He who seeks a religion other than self-surrender to Allah, it will not be accepted from him and in the life to come he will be among the lost.’ (3: 85). The Prophet says: ‘By Him who holds Muhammad’s soul in His hand, anyone of this community, a Jew or a Christian, who comes to know of me and dies without believing in what I have been sent with shall be among the dwellers of hell’.¹⁰⁰

Allah calls His servants who were good believers in past communities as Muslims. He says: ‘[Allah] has laid no hardship on you in [anything that pertains to] religion; the creed of your forefather Abraham. It is He Who has named you Muslims.’ (22: 78). However, it is part of the laws that Allah has set in operation that people shall differ and go their separate ways. The Prophet says: ‘Those communities before you who were given revelations divided into seventy-two creeds. This community will divide into seventy-three: seventy-two of them will be in hell and one in Paradise. This is the community’.¹⁰¹ This community is referred to in Arabic as *Ahl al-Sunnah wal-Jama’ah*, which literally means ‘the people united in following the Sunnah’.¹⁰² They are the ones who hold on to the Qur’an and follow the

100 Related by Muslim, 153.

101 Related by Ahmad, 16937; Abu Dawud, 4597; al-Tirmidhi, 2640 and 2641; Ibn Majah, 3991 and 3992.

102 The word Sunnah means ‘method’ or ‘set practice’, but in an Islamic context, it means ‘the Prophet’s method’.

Prophet's method, which is free of alien practices, inventions or deviation. This is the one group that will always prevail, as the Prophet says: 'There shall be in my community a group that will stand firm in implementing Allah's commandment. They shall not be perturbed by whoever lets them down or disagrees with them, until Allah's will shall come to pass while they prevail over other people'.¹⁰³

They stand in the middle between two opposites, upright in between two crooked paths and follow right guidance in between two errant ways:

- a. In the area of Allah's attributes, they are between those who give them form and those who negate them.
- b. In the area of Allah's action, they are between al-Jabriyyah and al-Qadariyyah.
- c. In the area of Allah's punishment and the names of faith and religion, they are between al-Murji'ah and al-Waidiyyah'
- d. In respect of the Prophet's companions: they are between al-Khawarij and the Shia.

"They are far removed from all errant creeds and deviant beliefs. They are happy with Allah's favour as He has caused faith to be dear to them, given it beauty in their hearts and made disbelief, wrongdoing and disobedience of Allah hateful to them: '[All this is indeed part of] Allah's bounty and favour. Allah is All-knowing, Wise.'" (49: 8).

May Allah bestow peace and blessings upon Muhammad, His servant and Prophet, and on all members of his household and companions.



103 Related by al-Bukhari, 3641; Muslim [his text], 1037 and 4955.



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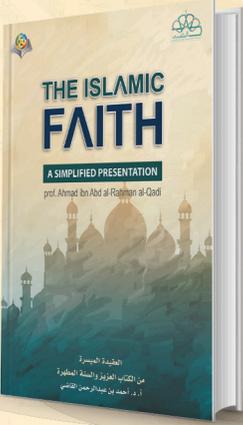


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In His infinite wisdom, God, the Mighty and Exalted, has let Muslims differ and follow different ways. A variety of reasons contribute to this state of affairs; some due to ignorance and others to the dictates of personal desires. Since their differences are on questions of religion, it is a duty of every Muslim who is keen to know the truth and follow it to learn what the Prophet (peace be upon him) taught and what he and his companions followed in practice. Indeed, every Muslim must follow their example.

This is a short book whose author has endeavoured to present to us what the Prophet and his companions maintained in the most serious area of faith, which is the area of beliefs.

He also explains the ideas of deviant groups, so that everyone has a clear idea.

We pray to God to reward the author well for his efforts, and also to grant His reward to everyone who contributed to this work, its translation, design, publication and follow up. May He grant rich reward to all and enable every one of our Muslim brethren to benefit by it.



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