

A Guide to Islām's Basics for New Muslims
Inquisitive Non-Muslims and
Neglectful Muslims!

THE MEANING OF ISLAM

A Brief Explanation of the Most Important
Principles and Teachings
Which Every Muslim Must Know

Islam: The way of Noah, Abraham, Moses and Jesus (ﷺ)

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إِنَّ الدِّينَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ الْإِسْلَامُ
“Verily, the way (of life) in the sight
of Allāh is Islām.” (3:19)

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Transliteration Table

Consonants

ء	'	د	d	ض	ḍ	ك	k
ب	b	ذ	dh	ط	ṭ	ل	l
ت	t	ر	r	ظ	ẓ	م	m
ث	th	ز	z	ع	'	ن	n
ج	j	س	s	غ	gh	ه	h
ح	h	ش	sh	ف	f	و	w
خ	kh	ص	ṣ	ق	q	ي	y

Vowels

Short	ـَ	a	ـِ	i	ـُ	u
Long	ـًا	ā	ـِي	ī	ـُو	ū
Diphthongs		ـَو	aw	ـَي	ay	

عَزَّوَجَلَّ The Mighty and Majestic.

صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ May Allāh make good mention of His Prophet in the highest company and grant him safety.

عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام Peace be upon him.

رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ Allāh be pleased with him.

Note: It is impossible to translate the Qur'ān into any other language whilst retaining its full range and depth of meaning. Hence, all verses from the Qur'ān cited in this work, whilst providing an accurate enough rendition of the basic meaning, remain limited due to the limitations of the English language and are unable to convey fully what is in the original Arabic.

Introduction

All praise is due to Allāh,¹ the Creator and Lord of the Worlds, the Lord of Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus and Muḥammad. May the peace and blessings be upon them all.

The book in your hands is intended for:

- Non-Muslims close to accepting Islām;
- New Muslims who have recently accepted Islām;
- Muslims wishing to learn or revise the basics;
- Parents desiring to familiarise their children with the basics.

This book serves all of these purposes at the same time and has been written with this goal in mind.

Utterance of the two testifications (shahādatān) regarding monotheism (tawḥīd) and messengership (risālah) enter a person into Islām. This declaration has a meaning (ma'nā), requirements (muqtaḍā), conditions (shurūṭ) and nullifiers (nawāqīḍ) which must be understood well. After a person enters Islām, he or she establishes the remaining pillars of Islām whilst seeking knowledge to increase inward Īmān, which is faith. Genuine faith leads to righteous works that are beneficial to the individual and the society. Thereafter, he or she strives for Iḥsān which is the rank of excellence and for the perfection of morals and character. This was the purpose of the messengership of Muḥammad (ﷺ) who said: "I was not sent [as a messenger] except to complete [perfect] the noble manners."²

Throughout the discussion of these subjects, important principles regarding belief and practice have been incorporated of which the reader must take note and learn. In addition, meanings and concepts have been simplified and explained through parables and analogies in order to facilitate better understanding. In sum, this work serves as both a primer on Islām and a concise revision guide.

Abū 'Iyāḍ Amjad Rafīq

27 Jumādā al-Thānī 1438 / 25 March 2017

¹ The name of this creator is Allāh (īl, el, ilāh, iloh, elah) in the languages of Hebrew, Aramaic (Syriac) and Arabic. This is not "the God of the Muslims" but the God of all Prophets, Messengers and mankind.

² Al-Bukhārī in *al-Adab al-Mufrad* and *al-Silsilah al-Ṣaḥīḥah* (no. 45).

Creation, Purpose and Accountability

Before we embark upon our discussion of the three levels which Islām is comprised of—and they are: *Islām* (submission), *Īmān* (faith) and *Ihsān* (excellence)—we will mention some brief words regarding creation and the purpose of life.

Modern research validates and supports the notion that belief in a creator is natural, innate and hard-wired. A creator's existence is also inferred from basic observation and reflection upon the natural phenomena in which there is order, regularity, beauty, adaptation, purpose and wisdom. Collectively, these phenomena indicate a **purpose** to life, since they are evidently designed and arranged for life, sustenance and repose through a vast, complex interconnected system of causes and effects. As such, the Creator would not neglect His creatures, but guide them to knowledge of their purpose and the means for its fulfilment. Thus, He sent Prophets with a message of **intrinsic meaning, value and direction** for human life. They explained the *why* and the *purpose* and conveyed moral codes and laws to enable the fulfilment of this purpose with ease. Resurrection after death, accountability in the hereafter and recompense for one's deeds justify the affirmation of absolute morality and a right and wrong. This view of existence and life provides a **rational and coherent** basis for objective morality and produces *genuinely* (not *superficially*) happy people who have something to live for beyond the life of this world because it creates **constructive, optimistic feelings** through the anticipation of recompense, reward and justice for one's efforts, struggles and pains in this life. Allāh (عَزَّوَجَلَّ) said:

أَفَحَسِبْتُمْ أَنَّمَا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ عَبَثًا وَأَنَّكُمْ إِلَيْنَا لَا تُرْجَعُونَ

“Did you think that We created you without purpose and that to Us you will not be returned?” (23:115).

This contrasts with the religious belief of atheists, naturalists and materialists that life is **purely accidental** and inherently meaningless and purposeless. This implies every human being is **insignificant and purposeless**. Thus, each person is born with the impossibility of ever

knowing a *why* or a *purpose* and will be compelled to create his or her own subjective meaning in life to avoid having nothing to live for.

This outlook tends to create **superficially happy people** with confused and contradictory ideas about what is right and wrong or moral and immoral. In this materialistic worldview, there is **no sound logical basis** for objective moral values and judgements. Thus, people can be *easily* and *justifiably* exploited morally, socially, economically and politically through liberal philosophies and lifestyle systems devised by the shrewd and cunning.

Some prominent atheists acknowledge that this view of life promotes **destructive, pessimistic feelings** in people when they realise that *ultimately, deep down* and in *actual reality*, their lives are utterly purposeless, meaningless and worthless and that any attempt to give meaning and significance to their lives is nothing but *self-delusion*. In other words, a person has to conduct life *pretending* it is meaningful because in the overall scheme of things within this belief system, it is utterly meaningless and of no value whatsoever. Atheists conduct their lives upon such a pretence. They call to pessimism and wretchedness because life is purely accidental and purposeless in their view. The Prophets and Messengers however call to felicity and success because life is objectively meaningful. There is ultimate recompense, reward and justice.

Given that life has *intrinsic meaning and purpose*, the following five points explain how and why humans are responsible and accountable for their choices and actions:

1. Faculties of knowledge and reflection. The first point is that humans have been granted certain faculties which provide the basis for **personal responsibility** (taklīf) and **accountability** (ḥisāb). These faculties are:

- hearing (sam'),
- seeing (baṣr),
- feeling, reflecting and thinking (fu'ād).

Allāh (ﷻ) said:

وَاللَّهُ أَخْرَجَكُمْ مِنْ بُطُونِ أُمَّهَاتِكُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ شَيْئًا وَجَعَلَ لَكُمُ السَّمْعَ وَالْأَبْصَارَ
وَالْأَفْئِدَةَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ

“And Allāh has brought you out from the wombs of your mothers while you knew nothing. And He gave you hearing, sight, and hearts that you might show gratitude.” (16:78).

Through these basic faculties, a person observes phenomena that are contrived, regular, orderly and undeniably designed to facilitate and maintain life. They include the alternation of the night and day; the sun’s light and life-giving qualities; the time-keeping of the sun and moon; the rain which revives the earth and brings forth its produce; the marvel of human reproduction; spouses which provide love and mercy to each other; the variation in skin complexions and languages; animals that provide food, transport and clothing; the abundance of vegetation and plant varieties; the nourishment of water, honey, milk and so on. These phenomena work together in harmony comprising a sustenance-providing abode for its inhabitants in which they enjoy innumerable benefits. Humans are hard-wired to infer from these phenomena the presence of agency, and hence, a creator.

These are the evident signs that all people, of all colours, races, classes and levels of intelligence in all parts of the world and in all times, observe and experience on a daily basis. They comprise the **minimal threshold of evidence** required for each person to know and be convinced that there is a creator and that there is an evident purpose to life.

If there is to be reward and punishment in life after death, then signs which lead to knowledge of the Creator’s existence and one’s purpose must be manifest to all people of all colours, races, classes and levels of intelligence without prejudice. No one must be disadvantaged in that regard. Thus, scientists and philosophers do not have any special status over others in this respect because the signs and evidences are plain to the physical senses of all people.

In its entire history, humanity has never strayed from this innate, intuitive default, except after the spread of conjectural, pessimistic materialist philosophy over the past century or so. This hard-wiring

is known as **fiṭrah** and includes a basic sense of purpose, common sense and morality which predisposes a person towards inner and outer purity, sound beliefs and beneficial actions. This is a raw, crude, malleable faculty and can be easily affected and moulded away from its original soundness to corruption during early childhood and beyond.

Thus, humans are endowed with faculties (hearing, seeing, feeling and thinking) and an instinct, a default disposition which—coupled with the physical senses and reflection—make a person inclined towards belief in a creator and they inculcate feelings of wanting to be grateful for the innumerable and indisputable favours he or she enjoys on a daily basis.

2. Desiring and acting. This leads us to the second point. There are two other faculties humans are endowed with: **desire, will** (irādah, mashāh) and **ability to act** (qudrah). A person is able to freely act on the basis of rational (or irrational) decisions—made possible through the aforementioned faculties of hearing, seeing and thinking—without feeling compelled. Allāh (عَزَّوَجَلَّ) said:

اعْمَلُوا مَا شِئْتُمْ إِنَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ

“Do whatever you will. Indeed, He is the seer of what you do.” (41:40). Thus, humans are able to acquire knowledge, think, reflect, evaluate, rationalise, desire, choose and act. This justifies the basis of human responsibility and accountability.

3. Nurturing innate disposition to outward perfection. Leading into the third point, the Creator sent revelation which cultivates the fiṭrah whose likeness is that of a seed planted within the soul. Revelation leads it to outward perfection through sound knowledge (al-‘ilm al-nāfi‘) and beneficial action (al-‘amal al-ṣāliḥ). The famous Muslim scholar Ibn Taymiyyah (d. 1328) said: “The Messengers were sent in order to corroborate and perfect the innate disposition (fiṭrah).”³ The nature of its perfection is indicated in the statement of the Prophet Muḥammad (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ), “I was not sent [as a messenger]

³ *Amrād al-Qulūb wa Shifā’uhā* (1402H, 3rd edition) p. 26.

except to complete [perfect] the noble manners.”⁴ Thus, each soul, already innately inclined to worship its Creator, is invited towards inner and outer perfection through revealed knowledge which provides guidance and felicity and protection of one’s beneficial interests in this life and the next.

4. Establishment of proof. However, reward and punishment do not take place—and this is the fourth point—until and after the proof has been established (iqāmat al-ḥujjah). This takes place by way of the revealed Books (kutub) and sent Messengers (rusul).

Allāh (عَزَّوَجَلَّ) said:

رُسُلًا مُّبَشِّرِينَ وَمُنذِرِينَ لِئَلَّا يَكُونَ لِلنَّاسِ عَلَى اللَّهِ حُجَّةٌ بَعْدَ الرُّسُلِ

“[We sent] messengers as bringers of good tidings and warners so that mankind will have no argument against Allāh after the messengers.” (4:165).

Whilst the fitrah provides a basic moral sense, detailed guidance, right and wrong, reward and punishment are not known except by way of revelation through the route of revealed books and sent messengers. This revelation includes signs, proofs, evidences and rationalities which establish the truth of its message, the truthfulness of the Prophets and Messengers and the inevitability of resurrection, accountability and just recompense.

5. No injustice. Fifthly and finally, since humans have been given hearing, seeing, feeling and thinking, the ability to choose and act and have been shown right and wrong in a detailed sense through books and messengers, Allāh’s justice (‘adl) has been established. Allāh is just in that he created humans already inclined towards His recognition and worship. He gave them faculties of sensory perception and reflection. He gave them the faculties of desiring, willing, choosing and effecting such desires and choices through their ability to act. He then sent Books and Messengers to direct them to clear, manifest signs and evidences which establish their truthfulness and the truth of what they convey. They conveyed

⁴ Al-Bukhārī in *al-Adab al-Mufrad* and *al-Silsilah al-Ṣaḥīḥah* (no. 45).

guidance and made clear the path of truth, goodness and rectification from the paths of falsehood, evil and corruption.

Thus, everyone who rejected and opposed the message cannot claim to have been wronged. Allāh's justice has already been established by virtue of what has preceded. From Allāh's justice is that He does not punish anyone—even if they are already committing wrong—until a messenger has been sent to them.

However, Allāh favours some of his creatures and gives them additional support in attaining guidance. It is given to those who sincerely desire it, yearn for it, seek it and pursue it.

وَيَزِيدُ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ اهْتَدَوْا هُدًى

“And Allah increases those who pursue and attain guidance, in [further] guidance.” (19:76).

This is the bounty and favour (faḍl) of Allāh. Hence, all humans are in between either the justice of Allāh or the favour of Allāh. No one is wronged in this life, and none shall be wronged in the next when accountability, reward and punishment take place.

Allāh (عَزَّوَجَلَّ) said:

مَنْ عَمِلَ صَالِحًا فَلِنَفْسِهِ وَمَنْ أَسَاءَ فَعَلَهَا وَمَا رَبُّكَ بِظَلَّامٍ لِلْعَبِيدِ

“Whoever does righteousness, it is for his own soul; and whoever does evil does so against it. And your Lord is never unjust to [His] servants.” (41:46).

And He also said, which summarises the entire affair:

مَنْ اهْتَدَىٰ فَإِنَّمَا يَهْتَدِي لِنَفْسِهِ وَمَنْ ضَلَّٰ فَإِنَّمَا يَضِلُّ عَنَّا وَلَا تَزِرُ وَازِرَةٌ وِزْرَ

أُخْرَىٰ وَمَا كُنَّا مُعَذِّبِينَ حَتَّىٰ نَبْعَثَ رَسُولًا

“Whoever pursues and attains guidance is only guided for [the benefit of] his soul. And whoever errs only errs against it. And no bearer of burdens will bear the burden of another. And never would We punish until We have sent a messenger.” (17:15)

From these introductory points, it should become clear that Allāh's justice ('adl) towards His creation has already been established. From here, a person must strive to attain Allāh's favour (faḍl) through the pursuit and attainment of right guidance which directs to beneficial

knowledge and righteous action which in turn lead to perfection of morals and character, something every Muslim must strive for.

The Muslim scholar, Ibn al-Qayyim (d. 1350) said: "He, the Sublime, is the Just (al-'Adl) who does not transgress or oppress and whose servants do not fear oppression from Him. This is agreed upon by all of the Books and Messengers, and it is from the decisive [matters] in opposition to which no [revealed] legislation can bring anything and in opposition to which no Prophet can inform of anything, fundamentally."⁵

Ibn al-Qayyim also said: "Allāh, the Sublime—from the perfection of His mercy and benevolence—does not punish anyone except after sending a messenger to him, even if this person is already engaged in what deserves rebuke and punishment. Allāh has two proofs for His servant. Though He has prepared them, He will not punish him except after establishing them against him. The first of them is the innate disposition (fiṭrah) with which He created him and through which he innately affirms that [Allāh] is his Lord, Master and Originator and that His right is binding upon him.⁶ And the second is the sending of His Messengers to him with a detailed elaboration of [what is already known by innate disposition], a corroboration and perfection of it. Hence, two witnesses will stand against him, the

⁵ *Hidāyat al-Ḥayārā*. Dār 'Ālam al-Fawā'id, p. 370.

⁶ In his Fixed-Point debate at the University of Alabama (2007), atheist Richard Dawkins admitted, "I think that when you consider the beauty of the world and you wonder how it came to be what it is, you are naturally overwhelmed with a feeling of awe, a feeling of admiration and you almost feel a desire to worship something. I feel this... We, all of us, share a kind of religious reverence for the beauties of the universe, for the complexity of life. For the sheer magnitude of the cosmos, the sheer magnitude of geological time. And it's tempting to translate that feeling of awe and worship into a desire to worship some particular thing, a person, an agent. You want to attribute it to a maker, to a creator." This is the fiṭrah, the innate disposition that everyone is born with. Disbelief (kufr) is to conceal, cover and prevent the fiṭrah from natural outward expression through one's pride, arrogance and preference for the world. Atheists do not have any empirical evidences for their claim that matter is eternal or that it self-creates and self-organises without choice and intent. It is pure conjecture.

witness of *fiṭrah* and the witness of legislation [brought by a messenger]. And this person will bear witness against himself that he was a disbeliever, just as Allāh the Exalted said:

وَشَهِدُوا عَلَىٰ أَنفُسِهِمْ أَنَّهُمْ كَانُوا كَافِرِينَ

‘And they will bear witness against themselves that they were [ungrateful] disbelievers.’ (6:130). Thus, He does not implement the judgement upon them except after corroboration by two witnesses and this is the extremity of justice.”⁷

Hence, innate disposition (*fiṭrah*) and the sent messengers will be two witnesses against the one who refused to show devotion to the one true deity—the Creator and Lord of the worlds—out of gratitude for the immense favours and bounties that he or she enjoys. Such a person will then testify on the Day of Reckoning that he or she was indeed ungrateful, and this is the meaning of disbelief (*kufr*). It is to prevent, conceal and cover the *fiṭrah* (innate disposition) from its natural outward expression (of worship and gratitude) with pride, arrogance, preference for the world and other such affairs.

Let us then proceed to discuss the meaning of the testification which enters you into Islām, makes you sinless by wiping your slate clean and enters you into the mercy and forgiveness of Allāh, the most-Merciful, and His immense reward.

⁷ *Aḥkām Ahl al-Dhimmah*. Ramādī lil-Nashar (1418H) 2/1013-1014.

The Meaning of 'Lā ilāha illallāh'

A person enters into Islām by uttering a testification (shahādah). By definition, testifying is to bear witness to something you know to be true and factual on the basis of direct experience.

The first part of the kalimah (statement of belief) is:

أشهد أن لا إله إلا الله

ash-hadu an lā ilāha illallāh

This means: "I testify that there is no deity [worthy of worship or worshipped in truth] except Allāh [alone]" and is explained by the following points:

1. The meaning of ilāh (deity, god). In Arabic, meanings of words are determined by their morphological patterns (shapes). The word ilāh takes the noun-pattern *fi'āl* (فِعَال), which is the same as *maf'ūl* (مَفْعُول), which means: *that to which something is done*. To illustrate: The word *kitāb* which takes this noun-pattern means book and a book is that which is written (*maktūb*), meaning, it was subject to the act of writing. Similarly, the word *bisāṭ* (rug) is that which is spread out (*mabsūṭ*), it was subject to spreading out. Similarly, the word *ilāh* which has the same pattern, translated as deity or god, is that which is subject to adoration and worship (*ma'lūh*). It is that in which people place and invest various states and feelings of the heart and make statements and perform actions amounting to veneration and worship, seeking through that the fulfilment of needs. It is similar to how a baby is drawn emotionally to its mother for its needs. Any being or object that is treated in this way and is shown devotion and worship in order to have needs fulfilled is a deity.

Deities are therefore numerous and diverse and can include living and non-living things such as stones, idols, trees, any of the elements or forces, the sun, moon, stars, angels, prophets, the righteous and so on. When a person takes any of these things as a deity and gives devotion and worship to it, it is a deity only in his mind and not in actual reality. Thus, all deities besides Allāh are only presumed to be deities in the minds of people but are false deities in actual reality.

2. A general negation (nafi). The opening phrase of this sentence, “*Lā ilāha ...*” is a denial, a negation. It is a rejection **not** of the existence of other deities besides Allāh, since they are many, but of:

- a) their worthiness of being taken as deities and worshipped,
- b) their worship being truth (ḥaqq) and justice (‘adl).

Hence, the first part of this phrase has the meaning that all deities presumed and erected by men are not worthy of being taken as deities and do not deserve worship. That all deities worshipped are not worshipped in truth and justice, but in falsehood and injustice because of *clear, rational reasons* that are discussed further below. This leads us to the second part of this phrase which is an exception to this generalisation.

3. An affirmation (ithbāt) through exception. The second part of the sentence, “... *illallāh*”, is an exception to the general negation. It affirms that only Allāh, the Creator of the Heavens and Earth and whatever is in between them is the true deity who alone is deserving and worthy of worship and whose worship comprises truth and justice. This is monotheism, singling out Allāh with worship and rejecting all other deities which are only presumed deities and which have been erected upon ignorance and injustice. From this, we gather the actual meaning of the word, Allāh (الله), the unique name of the Creator: the one who alone deserves to be worshipped and who alone is worshipped in truth.

This is known as the **unification of worship** (tawḥīd al-‘ibādah). It is to unify all forms and types of worship for the one, true deity. It is a simple truth which can be easily recognised by any person whose innate disposition (fiṭrah), common sense and basic reason is intact. Its proofs and evidences lie in His **evident lordship** over all of creation and His **beautiful names and lofty attributes** in which there is utmost perfection and in which He is resembled by none. We shall look at these two lines of evidence in what follows:

4. Rational arguments for the tawḥīd of worship. The Qur’ān outlines rational arguments for the truth of this statement—that none has the right to be worshipped but Allāh alone—and they can be summarised as follows:

- Evidence that no creature is able to **create** independently
- Evidence that no creature **owns** anything independently
- Evidence that no creature independently **regulates** the creation

and this is known by the fact that it:

- does not have independent control over life and death
- does not have independent control over benefit and harm
- does not have independent control over natural phenomena
- does not have independent control over sustenance, provision
- is not able to offer aid and deliver from calamities at will
- is not able to guide others to the truth at will
- is unable to hear, see and speak⁸
- does not have independent knowledge of the unseen
- is in need of food and drink and ultimately dies and perishes

In contrast, Allāh is the sole creator, the owner and regulator of His creation. He is the originator of all natural laws. He has absolute control over benefit and harm, He hears, sees and speaks, is able to help, support, protect, deliver, guide and is not in need of food or drink. He is the ever-Living who never tires, sleeps or dies. This is indicative of His **unique, absolute lordship** (tawḥid al-rubūbiyyah). Thus, worshipping Him alone is truth and justice and worshipping other deities, in all their various forms, is falsehood and injustice.

5. Beautiful names and lofty attributes. In addition to the observed signs which indicate the lordship of Allāh and the rational evidences which establish the futility of worshipping other deities, what further establishes Allāh's unique, exclusive right to be worshipped is what He is described with of **names and attributes** (al-asmā' wal-ṣifāt).

By mere reflection alone, a person can arrive at a limited number of Allāh's attributes, such as knowledge, power, wisdom, will, love, mercy and generosity. However, the limits of observation and reason prevent the attainment of detailed and complete knowledge which can only be acquired through revelation from Allāh Himself. Allāh can only be spoken of and described through what He revealed about Himself as He is more knowledgeable of His own self. Speaking about

⁸ In the case of idols, statues and other inanimate deities.

Allāh without knowledge is a great sin and is severely prohibited. The Jews ascribed the defective attributes of humāns to Allāh and the Christians ascribed the divine attributes of Allāh to Jesus.

Allāh's attributes—unlike those of His creatures—are perfect and free of deficiencies. For example, Allāh hears and sees all things at all times. Hearing and seeing one does not preoccupy Him from hearing and seeing others. It is not within our knowledge or understanding to fathom how this can be, because we are only used to experiencing the limited, flawed hearing and seeing possessed by us and other creatures. This disparity between the perfect attributes of the creator and the flawed, limited attributes of the creation is another rational evidence that none has the right to be worshipped but Allāh alone.

Whilst there are shared attributes between the Creator and His creation, the **resemblance is in name (ism) and meaning (ma'nā) only**, not in the actual underlying **reality (ḥaqīqah)**. Without there being similarity in name and meaning, we would never be able to acquire any knowledge of Allāh through the medium of language. Thus, we would be unable to know and love Him. What is denied then is the similarity in the actual *underlying realities* and not the *names and meanings*. Thus, Allāh's knowledge is not like our knowledge, His hearing is not like our hearing, His love and mercy is not like our love and mercy and so on. This is because we have no knowledge of the reality of His essence and since the reality of attributes follows on from the reality of essences, we can never know the reality of His attributes. However, we understand the meanings of His attributes and this knowledge cultivates the heart with states and feelings that lead to the heart's love and yearning for its Lord.

Here are just some of the beautiful names of Allāh:

- **al-Aḥad**: The Unique
- **al-Raḥmān**: The Extremely Merciful
- **al-Raḥīm**: The Bestower of mercy
- **al-A'lā**: The Most High
- **al-Akram**: The Most Generous
- **al-Ilāh**: The One who alone deserves to be worshipped
- **al-Awwal**: The First, before whom there is none

- al-Ākhir: The Last, after whom there is none
- al-Zāhir: The Uppermost One, lofty above all things
- al-Bātin: The Innermost One, closest to all things
- al-Khallāq: The Skilful Creator who creates again and again
- al-Bāri': The Maker
- al-Fātir: The Originator
- al-Ḥasīb: The Reckoner who suffices
- al-Ḥamīd: The Deservedly Praised
- al-Ḥayy: The Ever Living who never dies
- al-Qayyūm: The Self Subsisting upon whom everything depends
- al-Samī': The all-Hearing
- al-Baṣīr: The all-Seeing
- al-'Alīm: The all-Knowing
- al-Razzāq: The Great Provider
- al-Shakūr: The Most Ready to appreciate and reward abundantly
- al-Ṣamad: The Perfect Master upon whom everything depends
- al-Qadīr: The all-Powerful
- al-Qāhir: The Invincible Subduer
- al-Mutakabbir: The Supreme in glory and justly proud
- al-Mujīb: The Responsive to His slaves
- al-Muqtadir: The Omnipotent
- al-Muḥīt: The All-encompassing from which nothing escapes
- al-Ra'ūf: The Compassionate and Kind
- al-Raqīb: The Ever Watchful Guardian
- al-Shahīd: The Witness over all things
- al-'Azīz: The Mighty and Invincible
- al-Ghafūr: The Oft-Forgiving
- al-Wakīl: The Trustworthy disposer of affairs

From the numerous attributes of Allāh are:

- | | |
|-------------------|---------------------|
| - life (ḥayāt) | - knowledge ('ilm) |
| - wish (irādah) | - power (qudrah) |
| - hearing (sam') | - seeing (baṣr) |
| - speech (kalām) | - mercy (raḥmah) |
| - love (ḥubb) | - wisdom (ḥikmah) |
| - majesty (jalāl) | - gentleness (rifq) |
| - majd (glory) | - honour ('izzah) |

and many more.

A sound belief in this subject is summarised concisely through the following principles:

To affirm belief in Allāh's beautiful names and lofty attributes that are mentioned in His noble Book, the Qur'ān or have been mentioned by His noble Messenger (ﷺ) without:

- a) distorting their wordings or meanings (taḥrīf),
- b) denying them or divesting them from Allāh (ta'ṭīl),
- c) likening their realities to those of His creatures (tamthīl),
- d) specifying or asking how they are (takyīf).

It is obligatory to believe in the meaning of His attributes in a way that befits His Majesty without likening Him to His creation in any of His attributes and to believe that all of Allāh's attributes are perfect in every respect, without deficiencies.

The above can be summarised further in a more general, universal principle stated as: "Affirming His attributes (ithbāt) without making likenesses for them (tamthīl) and negating likeness for His attributes (tanzīh) without denying them (ta'ṭīl)."⁹

The Muslim scholar Imām al-Sa'dī (d. 1956) said: "Every time a servant increases in his knowledge of the names of Allāh and His attributes, his faith and certainty increase."¹⁰

It is upon a Muslim to acquaint himself with the names and attributes of Allāh, to understand their meanings, reflect upon them and then do what they require of speech and action. The Prophet (ﷺ) said: "To Allāh belong ninety-nine names, a hundred less one. Whoever learns [and acts upon them] will enter Paradise."¹¹ This refers to those names which have been mentioned in the revealed texts though Allāh's names are not limited to this number. Rather, He possesses unrevealed names that no one knows—not even the Prophets and Angels—except Him alone.

⁹ In other words, we strike a perfect balance between: a) affirming His attributes without exaggerating and likening them to those of His creation in their realities, and b) negating any likeness for His attributes without exaggerating in this and divesting (stripping) Allāh of His attributes altogether.

¹⁰ *Al-Tawdīh wal-Bayān Li Shajarat al-Īmān*. Adwā' al-Salaf. (1419H) p. 47.

¹¹ Reported by al-Bukhārī and Muslim from Abu Hurayrah (رضي الله عنه).

6. **Tawhīd (monotheism).** Thus, the uniqueness of Allāh in His lordship—referred to as **tawhīd al-rubūbiyyah**—and the uniqueness of Allāh in His names and attributes—referred to as **tawhīd al-asmā' wal-ṣifāt**—are evidences that He alone is worthy of worship and that the worship of others besides Him is falsehood and in vain.

Hence, the central message of all of the Prophets, of all revealed Books and of the Qur'ān is not that Allāh exists and that He alone creates, owns and regulates. This has never been disputed and is innately recognised by the overwhelming majority of humankind. Rather, the primary, central message of the Qur'ān contains the refutation of and warning against associating partners with Allāh in worship, which is falsehood and injustice, and the invitation to worship Allāh alone, which is truth and justice. Affirming Allāh's lordship—which has never been rejected by the vast majority of humanity—demands and necessitates only He is worshipped, exclusive to all other deities. This is the central argument of the Qur'ān against those who affirm belief in Allāh as Creator and Lord, yet worship others besides Him.

However, over the passing of time during history humanity often strayed from innate disposition (fiṭrah) and reason ('aql) by erecting false deities through exaggeration of the status of righteous people, awe of the natural phenomena or veneration of the celestial bodies. False religion was built upon such exaggeration.

Allāh then sent messengers to guide them back to their original state of worshipping Allāh alone and shunning all false deities:

وَلَقَدْ بَعَثْنَا فِي كُلِّ أُمَّةٍ رَسُولًا أَنِ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ وَاجْتَنِبُوا الطُّغُوتَ

“And We have certainly sent into every nation a messenger, [saying], “Worship Allāh [alone] and avoid false deities.” (16:36).

The Qur'ān relates how every messenger began his call by giving the following advice to his people:

يَا قَوْمِ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ مَا لَكُمْ مِنْ إِلَهٍ غَيْرُهُ

“O my people! Worship Allāh alone, you have no other deity besides him” (7:65).

This leads us to the definition and reality of worship which is vital to understand at this point:

7. **Worship** (‘ibādah). In terms of its reality, it is to combine the utmost of love (ḥubb) with the utmost of humble compliance (dhull).¹² Love without humble compliance and obedience is not worship and humble compliance devoid of love is not worship. One is only a worshipper when humble compliance is made on the basis of genuine love. Thus all human acts in which these two elements are combined are acts of worship of whatever or whoever is the recipient of this love and compliance. From another angle, in terms of its individual components: **Worship, is a comprehensive term for everything that Allāh loves and is pleased with from the statements and actions, both the inward and outward.**¹³ This encompasses all the righteous actions, those of the heart, the tongue and the limbs. Putting these two definitions together captures the essence of the meaning of worship.

8. **Types of worship.** Following on from the meaning and definition of worship, we will mention here some of the major types of worship. One should keep in mind the **binding connection** between Allāh's right of worship (ulūhiyyah) and lordship (rubūbiyyah). Anyone who directs these types of worship to other than Allāh is, by way of his action, implying that the qualities of lordship are possessed by others besides Allāh, even if he denies it with his tongue and protests that only Allāh is the creator, owner and regulator. If a person genuinely believed only Allāh is the *creator, owner and regulator* of the universe and that good and harm are controlled only by Him, he or she would direct these forms and types of worship exclusively to Allāh alone and to no other.

First, matters which involve request (ṭalab):

a. Invocation (du‘ā): This is from the greatest types of worship. It combines various feelings of the heart (such as love, hope, humility) with the physical act of supplication. It is the essence of worship.

¹² غاية الحب مع غاية الذل

¹³ العبادة هي اسم جامع لكل ما يحبه الله ويرضاه من الأقوال والأعمال الباطنة والظاهرة

b. Seeking aid (isti'ānah): One only seeks aid from the One who has complete control over all the means and mechanisms of aid, and that is Allāh, the Creator of all entities, beings, forces and cause effect mechanisms. To seek aid from others in worldly affairs in which they have power and ability is not worship.

c. Seeking refuge (isti'ādah): This is to seek protection and shelter. It originates in the heart and may manifest in speech or action as well. To seek protection from others in worldly affairs for which they have the power and ability is not worship.

d. Seeking rescue (istighāgha): Seeking rescue and deliverance from a calamity is from the greatest types of worship. To seek rescue from others in worldly affairs in which they have the power and ability is not worship. For example, to shout for rescue when caught in a fire, is simply asking someone for that which they have power and ability over. It is not worship.

As further clarification of the above and to remove any confusion: A person may seek aid, refuge or rescue from others besides Allāh with numerous conditions: that they are **living** (ḥayy), **hearing** (samī), **present** (ḥāḍir) and **able** (qādir), meaning have the power and ability to offer what is requested from them. These conditions distinguish between what falls into *permissible mutual aid and assistance* among people and what constitutes *forbidden worship* of others besides Allāh. Thus, whoever sought aid, refuge or rescue from a dead person, or one who is in another city hundreds of miles away and thereby unable to hear, or from one who is incapable in the matter being requested, then he has worshipped such a person. This is because such actions imply that the one being called upon, sought for aid, refuge or rescue has qualities of lordship (rubūbiyyah) such as being able to hear from hundreds of miles away, being able to respond without being present, having control over the forces and elements and so on. Thus, there is a contradiction between a person's belief in Allāh's unique lordship and his act of directing these affairs to others besides Him. But as for when someone in an accident seeks rescue from another who is at the scene and what is similar to this, then this does not constitute worship because such a person is *living, present, hearing and able* in the matter at hand.

Second, states and feelings of the heart:

e. **Love (maḥabbah)**: Love is worship when it is coupled with humble compliance (dhull) as has preceded. As for love between parents, children or husband and wife or for one who shows kindness, then this is natural love and is not considered to be the love of worship. However, putting love of others besides Allāh over and above the love of Allāh is forbidden. This is when the love of someone or something leads a person to compromise and to neglect his or her obligations.

f. **Hope (rajā')**: It is to hope for some goodness over which none has any power or control except Allāh alone such as bestowal of children or forgiveness of sins. However, hoping for assistance and support from others in worldly, material affairs is not worship, such as when a person hopes for financial assistance from his family.

g. **Fear (khawf)**: Fear is various types: Fear of what harms such as animals with a poisonous sting, an enemy, calamities, disasters and the likes. This fear is natural and is not worship. Then there is fear of something on the basis of a false belief coupled with reverence of that thing. In other words, it is to fear that someone or something other than Allāh might inflict you with such harm that only Allāh has power and control over, such as illness, poverty, death and the likes. This is worship. Then there is fear of people on account of which one abandons obligations or makes compromises. This is forbidden and constitutes a major sin.

h. **Reliance (tawakkul)**: This is to implement the ways and means for the attainment of whatever is desired and to then resign and entrust the actual attainment of it to Allāh alone who is the Creator of all causes (asbāb) and effects (musabbabāt). One must place this type of absolute trust only in Allāh, not in others besides Him and nor in one's own actions and efforts (or those of others) because they are only *one part* of what attains the objective. The heart's reliance and resigning of affairs to other than Allāh is worship. As for delegating (tawkīl) when one delegates and entrusts an affair to another, such as looking after an item, or performing some task or another, this is not worship so long as the heart does not resign and entrust the outcome to that person instead of Allāh.

Third, physical actions:

i. **Bowing and prostration** (rukū', sujūd). These are obvious and apparent forms of worship and they emanate from humility (dhull) and veneration (ta'zīm) of the heart.

j. **Ritual sacrifice** (dhabh): This is worship because a person spills the blood of an animal out of humility and reverence for the one who created and gave life to it and made it of benefit to him as sustenance and provision. Some ignorant people sacrifice animals out of veneration of a saint so as to repel harm or acquire some good. And others sacrifice for a jinn in order to please it and thereby ward off its evil. These are clear instances of worship.

These are some of the major types of worship which receive focused attention in the revealed texts. We can see that worship takes place in the heart, on the tongue and by the limbs.

This leads us to the question as to why people erect false deities, become attached to them and worship them alongside Allāh through the forms of worship we have just discussed. This is explained by the following:

9. False deities. A deity is only worshipped on the basis that it is able to provide some benefit.¹⁴ And a benefit can only be given by a being who possesses any one of four characteristics:

Either it is an **owner** (mālik) of whatever benefit the worshipper seeks from it. If not, then a **partner** (sharīk) in the ownership of the benefit being sought. If not, then an **assistant** (zahīr, mu'īn) of the owner of the benefit being sought. If not, then an **intercessor** (shafi') who—without needing or obtaining permission—intercedes at will with the benefit's owner for the one seeking the benefit, regardless of whether the owner is pleased with the seeker or not.

Thus, everything worshipped besides Allāh is worshipped on the basis of any one of these four false presumptions, all of which are negated and refuted in the Qur'ān:

¹⁴ Refer to Ibn al-Qayyim in *Madārīj al-Sālikīn* (1/351).

قُلْ أَدْعُوا الَّذِينَ رَعَيْتُمْ مِّن دُونِ اللَّهِ لَا يَمْلِكُونَ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَلَا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَمَا لَهُمْ فِيهَا مِن شِرْكٍ وَمَا لَهُ مِن لَّهُمْ مِنْ ظَهِيرٍ . وَلَا تَنْفَعُ الشَّفَعَةُ عِنْدَهُ إِلَّا مَن أَذِنَ لَهُ

“Say, [O Muḥammad], ‘Invoke those you claim [as deities] besides Allāh. They do not possess an atom’s weight [of ability] in the Heavens or on the Earth, and they do not have therein any partnership [with Him], nor is there for Him from among them any assistant. And intercession does not benefit with Him except for one whom He permits.’” (34:22-23).

To illustrate, Abraham, Moses, Jesus (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام) and Muḥammad (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ)—all lofty prophets amongst the Prophets of Allāh—do not own an atom’s weight in the Heavens or Earth. Nor are they partners with Allāh in ownership. Nor are they helpers to Allāh in the running and regulation of the Heavens and Earth. Nor are they able to intercede with Allāh on behalf of anyone except after receiving permission to do so and only for one whose speech and deed Allāh is pleased with in the first place. When these four qualities are negated from rational, living beings, then that they should be negated from inanimate beings (stones, statues, idols, elements, forces) is greater in justification.

Thus, the sun, the moon, stars, any of the natural phenomena, matter or energy in any of its forms, are not owners, partners in ownership, aiders or intercessors. Rather, they are owned by their creator, are subservient within the law-like behaviour determined for them and are subjected for goals, wisdoms and benefits.

It is foolish to take anything from them as deities that are worshipped. Hence, there is no rational basis for worshipping anything besides Allāh and worshipping other deities is falsehood, injustice and the height of foolishness, as Allāh (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ) said:

وَمَن يَرْغَبْ عَن مِّلَّةِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ إِلَّا مَن سَفِهَ نَفْسَهُ

“And who turns away from the religion of Abraham [the pure monotheist] except one who makes a fool of himself?” (2:130).

The rational arguments in the Qur’ān for the unity of worship for Allāh (tawḥīd al-ulūhiyyah) which we discussed earlier refute these four presumptions and establish that there is only one true deity and

that all deities besides him are false deities. As they do not control, own or regulate anything and do not have ultimate, independent control over life and death and benefit and harm, then there is no rational basis to worship them or to worship Allāh through them as intermediate channels.

Therefore, a **false deity** (ṭāghūt) is defined as the *worshipped* (ma'būd), *followed* (matbū') or *obeyed* (mutā') with respect to whom the limits have been overstepped as indicated by Ibn al-Qayyim and others.¹⁵

False deities are very many and at the head of them are:

- Satan (Iblīs),
- those pleased at being worshipped alongside Allāh,
- those who call others to worship them,
- those who claim knowledge of the unseen,¹⁶
- those who claim any of the attributes of divinity,
- those who judge by other than what Allāh revealed,¹⁷
- the heads of deviation who introduce heresies and novelties in religion and are followed in that.¹⁸

¹⁵ Refer to *l'ām al-Muwaqqi'īn* of Ibn al-Qayyim (1/54). Not every instance of exceeding the limits in worship, following and obedience necessarily constitutes major disbelief. Rather there are details to this subject. For example, the one whose heart is attached to material affairs, such as money and the likes is referred to as a "worshipper" of those things. But this is not the worship that constitutes associationism (shirk) that expels from the religion. Rather, it indicates a type of excessive attachment of the heart to others besides Allāh which is prohibited and detrimental to a person. These finer details must be understood and grasped by returning to the explanations of the scholars on basic texts such as *Kitāb al-Tawhīd*, *Thalāthat al-Uṣūl*, *al-'Ubūdiyyah* and the likes.

¹⁶ Such as magicians, diviners, soothsayers and the likes.

¹⁷ This subject has a detailed elaboration in the writings of the orthodox scholars of Aḥl al-Sunnah wal-Jamā'ah in opposition to the absolutions, exaggerations and and extremism of the Khārijite extremists and terrorists such as al-Qaeda, ISIS and others.

¹⁸ The author of the most authoritative Arabic dictionary, Ibn Manẓūr (d. 1311) said: "Every head in misguidance is a ṭāghūt." *Lisān al-'Arab* (8/444). The Qur'ān scholar, al-Qurṭubī (d. 1273) said: "Such as the Shayṭān, the soothsayer, the idol and everyone who called to misguidance." *Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī* (7/57) in explanation of al-Naḥl 16:36.

As for the Prophets and the righteous who are taken as deities and worshipped, they are not referred to as “false deities” because they are not pleased that they should be worshipped alongside Allāh and nor do they invite others to worship them. They are free and innocent of the worship given to them and they will declare themselves innocent on the Day of Judgement. For example, Jesus (عِيسَى) never called the people to worship him as a deity alongside Allāh and he will exonerate himself on the Day of Judgement.¹⁹

From everything that has preceded, we are now ready to look at the **crux of the whole matter**, the true nature of the battle between the Messengers and the people to whom they were sent, between truth and falsehood, guidance and misguidance, justice and injustice, light and darkness, between the worship of the one true deity and the worship of false deities:

10. The Central Point of Dispute. It should now be clear that the central point of dispute between the Messengers and the various people to whom they were sent was around the issue of worshipping Allāh alone, and not the mere belief that He exists and is the sole, unique creator, provider and sustainer. Every Messenger began his call by inviting his people to single out Allāh in worship and to abandon worship of all other deities; this forming the basis for an upright, just, moral, genuinely happy and prosperous society. In the Qur’ān, every Messenger is recorded as having said to his people:

يَا قَوْمِ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ مَا لَكُمْ مِنْ إِلَهٍ غَيْرُهُ

“O my people! Worship Allāh alone, you have no other deity besides Him.” (7:65).

However, the leaders of the people—those who control, influence and direct them—had **vested interests** in the various false deities and

¹⁹ It is not the case that everyone who is labelled a false deity (tāghūt) is thereby necessarily a disbeliever, since the heads of misguidance, deviation and innovation with respect to whom the limits of following and obedience have been transgressed are referred to as false deities, though they may not guilty of disbelief and thus not expelled from Islām.

religious systems that had been erected around them. These interests were social, economic and political in nature, relating to wealth, status and power. Unwilling to let go of these interests, despite knowing the truth and rationality of what the Messengers called to, these people showed opposition, enmity and aggression towards the Messengers and their followers. The Messengers were accused of being liars, magicians, insane, trouble-causers and their followers were ridiculed as being unintelligent, backward, lowly, weak and poor.

Allāh (عَزَّوَجَلَّ) said regarding these leaders and influencers:

وَعَجِبُوا أَنْ جَاءَهُمْ مُنذِرٌ مِّنْهُمْ وَقَالَ الْكٰفِرُونَ هٰذَا سِحْرٌ كٰذِبٌ. اٰجَعَلْنَا الْاٰلِهَةَ اِلٰهًا
وٰجِدًا اِنَّ هٰذَا لَسَيِّءٌ عَجَابٌ. وَاَنْطَلَقَ اَمْلًا مِّنْهُمْ اِنْ اَمْشَوْاْ وَاَصْبِرُوْا عَلٰى اٰلِهَتِكُمْ اِنَّ
هٰذَا لَسَيِّءٌ يُّرَادُ

“And they wonder that there has come to them a warner from among themselves. And the disbelievers say, ‘This is a magician and a liar. Has he made the gods [only] one God? Indeed, this is a curious thing.’ And the eminent (the leaders) among them went forth, [saying], ‘Continue, and remain constant over [worship and defence of] your gods. Indeed, this is a thing desired. (38:4-7).

Fearing the loss of status, riches and power accumulated on the back of false religion, the leaders of past nations misguided their people through deception, propaganda, preoccupying them in pleasures and pastimes and ridiculing the Messengers, their call and their followers, in order to hinder them from the truth.

In addition, the disbelievers exulted in the advanced worldly knowledge and expertise they possessed, wrongly thinking that it justified their rejection of the Messengers and the truth which they called to:

فَلَمَّا جَاءَتْهُمْ رُسُلُهُمْ بِالْبَيِّنٰتِ فَرِحُوا بِمَا عِنْدَهُمْ مِنَ الْعِلْمِ

“Then when their Messengers came to them with clear proofs, they were glad (and proud) with that which they had of the knowledge (of worldly things).” (40:83).

They believed that their knowledge in the fields of agriculture, industry, construction, their speculative sciences and conjectures

about the universe and life and whatever technologies of the time they possessed made them superior, invincible and hence not in need of guidance. They used their worldly achievements to hinder others from the path of truth and guidance.

In reality, they were blinded by their pride and arrogance from plain, manifest truths and the visible signs (āyāt) of Allāh all around them in the horizons and within their souls.

The Qur'ān mentions the end-result of all such nations in the past as a warning and admonition to those after them.

أَوَلَمْ يَسِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ فَيَنْظُرُوا كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِهِمْ كَانُوا أَشَدَّ
مِنْهُمْ قُوَّةً وَأَنَابُوا الْأَرْضَ وَعَمَرُوهَا أَكْثَرَ مِمَّا عَمَرُوهَا وَجَاءَتْهُمْ رُسُلُهُم بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ فَمَا كَانَ
اللَّهُ لِيظْلِمَهُمْ وَلَكِن كَانُوا أَنفُسَهُمْ يَظْلِمُونَ

“Have they not travelled through the earth and observed how was the end of those before them? They were greater than them in power, and they tilled the earth and built it up more than they have built it up, and their messengers came to them with clear evidences. And Allāh would not ever have wronged them, but they were wronging themselves.” (30:9).

كَذَّبَتْ قَبْلَهُمْ قَوْمُ نُوحٍ وَأَصْحَابُ آلِ رَسٍ وَنُؤْمُودُ وَعَادٌ وَفِرْعَوْنُ وَإِخْوَانُ لُوطٍ وَأَصْحَابُ
الْأَيْكَةِ وَقَوْمُ تُبَّعٍ كُلٌّ كَذَّبَ الرُّسُلَ فَحَقَّ وَعِيدِ

“Before them, the people of Noah denied, as did the companions of the well and Thamūd. And the ‘Ād [people] and Pharaoh and the brethren (city) of Lot. And the companions of the thicket and the people of Tubba’. All denied the messengers, so My threat was justly fulfilled.” (50:12-14).

Hence, the battle was around the issue of worshipping Allāh alone (tawḥīd) and shunning all other deities *because* it is liberation from enslavement and injustice. The leaders of the people knew and understood the *social, economic and political* implications of people leaving invented, fabricated gods and false religions and worshipping the only true deity, Allāh, and submitting to him alone in which lies

true satisfaction, peace and serenity of the mind, heart and soul.²⁰ Whoever claims that the Messengers came to simply establish *belief in a supreme creator* and that this was the essence of their monotheistic call, is in plain, manifest error.

11. The meaning of the testification. Thus, in light of all that has preceded, with this simple concise statement, *Lā ilāha illallāh*, you are expressing the following **truthful, profound, powerful, liberating, enriching and self-empowering** meaning:

“I have firm knowledge and conviction—arrived at by innate disposition, sensory perception, common sense, rational evidences and sound reason guided by revelation—of the fact that there is no deity except that it is worshipped in falsehood and injustice, not truth and justice, whether this deity is inanimate (stones, statues, idols) or animate (trees, animals, humans, angels, jinn), or from the observed phenomena (sun, moon, wind, rain, lightning, thunder) or any of the natural laws or cause-effect mechanisms within creation (interplays of matter, energy, forces). That none of these entities or forces are worthy of being worshipped because they are mere slaves, subject to laws and do not have independent powers to create, own, regulate, guide, misguide, aid, rescue and so on. The only deity worthy of worship and who is worshipped in truth and justice is Allāh, the Creator of the Heavens and Earth, creator of all beings, of all elements and forces and of all natural laws and cause-effect mechanisms, the One described with the most beautiful names and the loftiest attributes, the ever-Living who never dies.”

²⁰ A Muslim who worships Allāh alone and takes his guidance, morals and law from Islām does not deal with usury (interest). He does not drink. He does not gamble. He does not engage in fornication before marriage or adultery after it. All of these are destroyers of society. They lead to loss of life and intellect; destruction and embezzlement of wealth; economic enslavement through debt burden; disruption of lineage; breakdown of marriage and its abolition as an institution; removal of material (private property) and inheritance rights and so on. A Muslim woman guards her modesty and chastity and is not exploitable, economically or socially. Thus, Muslims, as a commodity, are not as profitable and do not make good, exploitable slaves. Islām leads to rectification of societies and is a hindrance to private interests founded on exploitation of base human desires.

The Prophet Muḥammad (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) said: “Whoever said ‘Lā ilāha illallāh’ sincerely from his heart will enter Paradise.”²¹ He also ordered one of his companions, Abū Hurayrah (رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ), to give glad tidings of Paradise to “the one who testifies that none has the right to be worshipped but Allāh whilst having firm conviction in his heart.”²² These traditions relate to those who express this statement with knowledge, sincerity and conviction and thereafter abide by its requirements in speech and deed, and thereafter remain firm upon it and die upon it.

12. The greatest injustice. It should now be clear that the greatest injustice is to associate partners with Allāh in worship. The worship of others—whether humans, the jinn, the angels, the celestial bodies including the earth, sun and moon, the elements, trees, stones, even the prophets themselves or the righteous living or dead or the elements and forces—is the greatest injustice (ẓulm). In Islāmic terminology it is referred to as associationism (shirk) and is the only sin that will never be forgiven if a person dies upon it:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَغْفِرُ أَنْ يُشْرَكَ بِهِ وَيَغْفِرُ مَا دُونَ ذَلِكَ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ وَمَنْ يُشْرِكْ بِاللَّهِ فَقَدِ افْتَرَىٰ إِثْمًا عَظِيمًا

“Verily, Allāh forgives not that partners should be set up with him in worship, but He forgives besides that [anything else] to whom He pleases. And whoever sets up partners with Allāh in worship, has indeed invented a tremendous sin.” (4:48).

This crime is more unjust than stealing, murder, adultery and other similar crimes and transgressions which, although serious, can be forgiven. These crimes are crimes of desires, lusts and passions and are not driven by rejection of the universal order. As for *shirk*, it is a gross violation of the universal order.

Its reality can be highlighted through the example of a person who shows gratitude and devotion to a tree, brick, mouse or cat for the many years of toil and struggle that his parents endured in raising

²¹ *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Jāmi’ al-Ṣaḥīḥ* (no. 6433) and *al-Silsilah al-Ṣaḥīḥah* (no. 2355).

²² Related in *Kitāb al-Īmān* in *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*.

him.²³ Or the example of when someone charitably builds a house for another and this person gives thanks and appreciation to the wood, bricks and cement of the completed house rather than to the builder of the house.

This is raw foolishness, a violation of the empirically known order of things and gross injustice. In a similar way, worshipping humans—including the prophets and the righteous, dead or alive—animals, the forces, the elements or anything from the intertwined system of causes and effects within this universe is gross injustice. It opposes innate disposition and comprises revilement of sound intellect.

The Qur'ānic reasoning against those who worship other deities is clear, simple and powerful: How can you affirm that Allāh:²⁴

- is the Creator of the Heavens, the Earth, and all of humanity
- subjected the sun and moon (for humanity 's benefit)
- sends down rain and revives the Earth
- owns the dominion of the Earth and of all things
- has the most beautiful names and lofty attributes
- is the Lord of the Seven Heavens and of the Mighty Throne
- is sought for refuge and there is no refuge from Him
- sustains creation through provisions from Heaven and Earth
- bestows and controls faculties of sight and hearing
- brings the living out of the dead and the dead out of the living
- regulates, controls all of the creation
- responds to the one in distress when he invokes Him

and yet you worship others besides Him, when they do not have any of these qualities or perform any of these actions. Some of you

²³ This is not to imply that the Creator of the Heavens and the Earth becomes weary or tired in maintaining and providing for His creatures. He (عَزَّوَجَلَّ) said regarding the Heavens and Earth, "Their preservation tires Him not. And He is the Most High, the Most Great" (2:255). Allāh (عَزَّوَجَلَّ) provides and spends upon His creatures without anything diminishing from His kingdom and without any tiredness or weariness on His behalf, He is the ever-living (al-Ḥayy) sustainer (al-Qayyūm) of all things. Nothing is diminished from His dominion by providing for His creatures.

²⁴ One can refer to the following verses in the Qur'ān: Luqmān (31:25), al-Zumar (39:38), al-'Ankabūt (29:61), al-Zukhruf (43:87), al-'Ankabut (29:63), al-Zukhruf (43:9), al-Mu'minūn (23:84-89) and Yunus (10:31).

sincerely worship Allāh alone during calamities when you know none can save but He, but worship others during times of ease.

Hence, such people are rebuked severely in the Qur'ān through the statements: "How are they deluded?" (29:61), "How are they bewitched?" (23:89), "They do not take admonition!" (23:85), "They do not have piety, fear of Allāh!" (23:87). Even worse, some of the modern latecomers worship others *in times of both hardship and ease*, showing that the ancients were more intelligent than them.

13. Doubts and misconceptions. There are those who ascribe to Islām but who have followed the ways of previous nations in associating partners with Allāh in worship. They have arguments to justify their worship of other deities. They claim to believe firmly in Allāh's Lordship yet invoke saints to solicit their intercession and assistance, claiming that the saints have status with Allāh and can petition Allāh on their behalf. They also invoke them for rescue, claiming Allāh responds to them when they invoke the saints. They wrongly assert that these actions of invocation and calling for rescue [in affairs which only Allāh has power over] do not constitute worship, though they are the greatest forms of worship. Hence, they misunderstand the reality and nature of worship (‘ibādah).

Further, they try to differentiate the worship of saints from the worship of idols despite the fact that in the Qur'ān, Allāh *did not differentiate between any of the numerous categories worshipped besides Him*, whether the sun, moon, stars, stones, idols, humans, prophets, angels or the jinn. The **core, central issue** is giving *anything or anyone* a share of worship that is due to Allāh alone, irrespective of what or who that thing is.

The sum of these doubts and misconceptions can be addressed by the following points:

a) Those to whom the Prophet (ﷺ) was sent did not dispute that Allāh is the Lord, the Creator, the Owner and Provider. They had firm, unwavering conviction in this as is evident in the Qur'ān, as has already preceded, and this did not enter them into Islām.

b) The various factions addressed by the Qur'ān include those who worship the sun, moon, stars, stones, idols, trees, angels, jinn and the prophets and righteous. The Qur'ān did not distinguish between any of them, because they all directed something of worship—such as invocation (du'ā)—to other than Allāh.

c) Their argument was that they certainly do not affirm lordship for their deities, nor do they directly ask their deities to repel harm and bring benefit. But rather, they simply desire the **intercession** of those whom they invoke and seek **nearness** to Allāh through them.

d) From the above, it should be clear that associationism (shirk) is not limited to idols or the worship of inanimate things alone. The Qur'ān refutes not just the idol-worshippers, but a variety of factions including those who invoke the Prophets and righteous.

e) Those who worship idols do not believe that their idols create, own and regulate anything. No idol-worshipper ever believed such a thing. Idols are used as focal points for the original entity being worshipped: a celestial body, a heavenly spirit or a human being amongst other things. This worship is justified by the claim that to approach Allāh *indirectly* through intermediaries is better than to approach Him directly. The Qur'ān and all revealed Books came to invalidate this falsehood as it is the foundation of associationism.

f) Invoking the prophets and the righteous is indeed worship even if one does not believe that they create, own or regulate. Invocation (du'ā) is from the greatest forms and types of worship and is given much attention in the Qur'ān. The Qur'ānic prohibition of invoking others besides Allāh is explicit:

فَلَا تَدْعُوا مَعَ اللَّهِ أَحَدًا

“So invoke not, anyone alongside Allāh.” (72:18).

Just as the command to invoke Him alone is explicit:

فَادْعُوا اللَّهَ مُخْلِصِينَ لَهُ الدِّينَ

“So invoke Allāh making worship purely for Him alone.” (40:14).

Hence, invocation (du'ā) is worship. To invoke others—*irrespective of whether one believes that they create, own and regulate or not*—amounts to worship. Further, if a person truly believed that Allāh alone creates, owns and regulates, then he or she would not invoke others. This is a clear contradiction between what one believes and what one

does. The entire argument of the Qur'ān in affirmation of Tawhīd and invalidation of associationism is against this blatant contradiction.

14. Safeguarding Tawhīd. Since Tawhīd is the most excellent of good deeds and since its opposite, associationism is the worst of evil deeds, then the Qur'ān and the Prophetic traditions, representing complete guidance, have ensured that *all avenues leading to the creation of false deities and worship of them besides or alongside Allāh* are cut off at their roots. Hence, the following affairs (by way of example) are enjoined in the texts and should be observed:

§ Having the utmost sincerity and truthfulness in one's intentions, words and deeds.

§ Not excessively praising and raising people above their levels, including the prophets and righteous, as this type of exaggeration and excess is the starting point of the deification of humans.

§ Not raising, adorning and embellishing graves.

§ Not imitating the ways of previous nations whose excesses and innovations led them to worship others besides Allāh.

§ Not building mosques in graveyards or making gravesites as places where Allāh is worshipped.

§ The prohibition of astrology and the futility of the claim that the celestial bodies and their positions and movements affect life, death, victory, defeat, fortune and misfortune.

§ Prohibition of charms, talismans and amulets.

§ Prohibition of praying during sunset and sunrise to avoid the presumption that the sun is being worshipped.

§ Showing moderation in one's love of material things, people, relatives and near ones.

§ Remaining cautious and fearful of falling into associationism as it starts as something slight and develops into what is greater.

§ Not creating statues of humans and animals or any other form of representation as this can lead, over time, to their veneration and deification. Thus, the route is cut off from the very beginning.²⁵

²⁵ Muslim scholars make exceptions for matters of necessity such as passports, driving licences, identity cards and what is similar.

§ The prohibition of belief in omens wherein negative effects are wrongly believed to be tied to certain causes, leading to baseless fear and undue abandonment of desirable activities.

§ Severe prohibition of magic as it is a doorway to associationism (shirk) and disbelief (kufr).

For the sake of brevity, we have mentioned only some of the many injunctions and guidelines in the Qur'ān and Prophetic traditions. It is upon a Muslim to embark upon a detailed study of this important subject matter and not remain ignorant about it as ignorance is the fountain of misguidance. Allāh has *prohibited* all ways and means that lead to deities being erected and worshipped. He has also *commanded* all the ways and means that safeguard a person's Tawhīd in belief, speech and deed. Detailed knowledge in relation to these two matters protects sound religion.²⁶

Despite all of this clarity, and all of these safeguards it is inevitable that misguidance and deviation will still take place within the Muslim nation, just as it took place in the nations that came before. This is a matter decreed by Allāh due to certain wisdoms. From them is to differentiate those who hold fast to right guidance from those who follow whims and desires. The difference between the Muslim nation and previous nations is that the Qur'ān and Prophetic traditions have been preserved for Muslims and thus, the criterion between truth and falsehood will remain. This means that the truth regarding that wherein the people differ over time is always accessible for the one who sincerely desires and pursues it.

Finally, our discussion would not be complete without addressing how deviation away from Tawhīd takes place in subtle steps. This will give further insight to the reader as to how **ignorance** and **doubts** are employed by Satan to misguide humankind away from the truth.

15. Deviation from Tawhīd occurs in small steps. Satan is an avowed enemy to the offspring of Ādam (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام). He refused to obey Allāh's

²⁶ The best of what can be studied in this regard is *Kitāb al-Tawhīd* of Shaykh al-Islām Muḥammad bin 'Abd al-Wahhāb (d. 1792).

command to prostrate to Ādam out of pride and arrogance and when doomed to punishment, he asked for respite which he was given till the Day of Judgement. He then promised to mislead all the children of Ādam by making them become ungrateful, worship others alongside Allāh and do deeds opposed to their original nature, deeds that are harmful to themselves and to society. He has done this throughout history—using a step by step method that usually spans many generations—thereby giving rise to false religion which takes on many forms and manifestations. The Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) said, relating that Allāh (عز وجل) said: “Indeed, I created My servants upright, inclined to truth. But then the devils came to them and caused them to swerve from their religion [of monotheism].”²⁷ Allāh sent Messengers to humanity to guide them and return them to their original state.

From the cunning of Satan is that he misguides through small unnoticeable steps and his schemes lasts many generations, over hundreds of years. He takes human beings either from the angle of *excess and exaggeration* or the angle of *belittlement and neglect*.

We will provide an illustration as to how Satan uses exaggeration (ghuluww) in righteous people to lead people into worshipping them as deities alongside Allāh. This will also reveal the wisdoms of the Qur’ānic and Prophetic teachings in cutting off all the routes through which people might deviate from the Tawḥīd of the Messengers.

The First Step: When a righteous figure dies Satan, knowing of the great respect and love people have for this person, inspires the close relatives of the deceased—through their love of the deceased and their desire to respect and honour the deceased—to embellish the grave and build over it. People compete with each other in this regard, thinking that they are showing greater respect and honour to their loved ones over others and that not doing so entails disrespect and belittlement of the deceased.

The Second Step: Beautification of graves requires maintenance, leading to frequent visits to the grave. During these visits, Satan inspires a person with the idea that invoking Allāh (عز وجل) by the grave

²⁷ Related by Muslim in his Ṣaḥīḥ (no. 5109).

is commendable, if not better than invoking Him at home or the mosque, and that it is more likely to be responded to.

The Third Step: Over time, the person moves from invoking Allāh directly by the side of the grave to invoking Allāh through the dead person in the form of asking Allāh for his needs by mentioning the status (jāh) or right (ḥaqq) of the dead person. He says, “O Allāh I ask you by the right this person has with you” or “I ask you by the status this person has with you”. Satan inspires this person to wrongly believe that Allāh must answer his invocation with mere mention of the status or right of the deceased and this is disrespect to Allāh, it is a type of imposition, as if Allāh must respond. Allāh is not obliged to respond to a person merely because of the good standing of another. The two affairs are unconnected and Allāh did not legislate this approach as a fruitful means. Whilst this act in itself is not associationism (shirk) because the deceased has not yet been invoked and worshipped directly, it is a stepping stone towards it.

The Fourth Step: Once a person has been accustomed to invoking Allāh and requesting from Him through the status of the deceased, it is a natural step to invoke the deceased directly and ask for his or her intercession (shafā'ah) with Allāh. Satan inspires this person to believe that the deceased can hear and respond, first from near and then from afar. Rather than remain within the limits of guidance and patience and suffice himself with his own invocation and that of the living for him, he reasons that the dead person is closer to Allāh (due to his piety and because he is in the intermediate stage between the world and the hereafter). He therefore asks the deceased—as an intermediate intercessor—to invoke Allāh (ﷻ) on his behalf and ask Allāh for the fulfilment of his needs, whether attaining some good or repelling some harm. He may address the deceased directly by first standing at his grave, and then later from a distance, away from the grave. At this point, associationism (shirk) has occurred because this person is now clearly directing worship (invocation) to the deceased.

The Fifth Step: Satan then inspires him to believe that winning favour with the deceased helps him to earn continuous intercession

from him with Allāh and therefore, he must venerate and respect the deceased through acts of devotion. It is here that the deceased and his grave will be taken as an idol worshipped alongside Allāh and the door is opened for all other major acts of worship to be directed to the deceased: seeking rescue in times of hardship (istighāthah), seeking aid in matters which only Allāh has power over (isti'ānah), asking for cure, making a devotional sacrifice of an animal (dhabḥ) and so on. Satan inspires such people to believe that this is the right of the deceased, to be venerated and respected in this manner and that their worldly affairs will not be set aright without this.

The Sixth Step: Then Satan inspires the leaders amongst them to call the people at large to this way. He commands them to make the graves and tombs of the deceased as celebratory locations (ṭīd) and places of devotion which are most beneficial for them in this life and the next. He incites them to rush to these locations for the fulfilment of their needs. By now, the foundations of false religion have been laid down. Many forms of social and economic exploitation naturally follow. A *religious system* develops and allows for some to enrich themselves through the exploitation of the ignorant, naive and gullible and those looking for cheap salvation without having to bear the burden of observing the law. The beneficiaries of false religion then show enmity to anyone who calls for invocation and worship to be made only to Allāh and who expounds the Tawḥīd of the Messengers, that none has the right to be worshipped but Allāh alone and who explains that respecting the deceased does not mean granting them a right which belongs only to Allāh (عزري). Rather, one invokes Allāh's forgiveness for them as they are most in need of that whilst they are not invoked alongside Him. Yet the associationists claim that this is belittlement and disrespect of the righteous dead and constitutes war against Allāh because the righteous dead are His close allies and friends (awliyā'). They argue that *not fulfilling their rights* (they mean: *to invoke and worship them*) is the greatest of crimes. The leaders incite the common folk against the callers to truth, deceiving them into thinking that the callers to Tawḥīd are the enemies of Allāh, when in reality they are His friends and allies.

Thus, the deception becomes complete and Satan has successfully misguided them through his cunning, step by step, just as he did with the people of Noah (عِبْرَانِيَّة) and many nations throughout history. Not only did he misguide them, but he made them his soldiers in inviting to disbelief (kufr) and associationism (shirk). In such a manner, Satan made false religion fair-seeming to great multitudes of people across the Earth and made Islām—whenever a messenger or his followers called to it—to appear strange and backward. The above discussion also highlights the nature of idol-worship. It is in fact a nexus, a web of many things. Underlying it is veneration and worship of celestial bodies, spirits or humans while physical objects are used as focal points to channel devotion to them. The Qur’ān addresses all aspects and elements of this web.

In conclusion: Through the above discussion, we should have acquired a thorough understanding of the first part of the declaration of Islām centred around Tawhīd.

The second part of the declaration of Islām relates to messengership which is *the means* by which knowledge of how the first is actualised is acquired, there being no other way to acquire this knowledge except through this route.

Anyone who claims connection with the Creator through a route other than that of the revealed Books and sent Messengers is a liar. Allāh selected whom He willed from those of His servants who were noble, upright, truthful and trustworthy to be His messengers. He revealed His messages to them and strengthened them with signs, miracles, evidences and proofs to make clear that they are truthful and are genuine Messengers who have come with beneficial guidance from their Lord. Further, all messengers were humans and spoke in the language of the people to whom they were sent. This is the closest and most practical way to impart guidance which is more easily followed by example and imitation of one who is from and within a people rather than being alien to them. Hence, revelation only comes through the route of the Messengers and in the language of the people to whom they are sent.

As for all other individuals, Allāh inspires some people—those who sincerely desire guidance and pursue it—with thoughts and feelings or He puts them in certain situations or gives them experiences that lead them to make certain choices in their lives which in turn lead them to arrive at true guidance and at what is beneficial for them in this life and the next. This is known as **inspiration (ilhām)** and is not the same as **revelation (wahy)** which is revealed guidance coupled with a law that a messenger conveys to a whole nation, society or people. Thus, Allāh inspires those who seek guidance and desire it sincerely and genuinely as a means of directing them to their personal, individual guidance, but He does not send them revelation which is to be conveyed to others, that is only for those whom He selects and favours. Genuine, truthful messengers selected by Allāh can always be distinguished from liars and imposters simply by evaluating their historical background, their character, their claims, and the nature of what they profess and call to.

Once this is clear, let us discuss the second part of the declaration of Islām which signifies messengership (risālah).

The Meaning of ‘Muḥammad Rasūlullāh’

The second part of the statement of belief (kalimah) is:

وأشهد أن محمدا رسول الله

wa ash-hadu anna muḥammadan rasūlullāh

This means: “And I testify that Muḥammad is the Messenger of Allāh” and is explained by general points followed by specific points. As for the general:

1. Belief in the Prophets and Messengers. Prophet Muḥammad (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) is the last in a series of messengers starting with Noah (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام). All of them called to Islām upon the foundation of pure monotheism as has preceded. Testifying to the messengership of Muḥammad (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) incorporates belief in all previous prophets and messengers. Rejecting any previous prophet sent by Allāh is a rejection of prophethood in principle. Similarly, rejecting the prophethood of Muḥammad (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) is a rejection of all previous prophets including Noah, Abraham, Moses and Jesus (عَلَيْهِمُ السَّلَام) and of prophethood itself. Hence, this second part of the testification affirms both the prophethood of Muḥammad (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) and of all previous prophets by inclusion. The Islām of Muḥammad (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) is a perfection of the Islām of all previous prophets. The Prophets and Messengers are the route through which tawḥīd and its details are acquired and learned. Thus, the binding link between **monotheism** (tawḥīd) and **messengership** (risālah).

2. Intermediaries of conveyance, not worship. The Prophet Muḥammad (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) and all other prophets and messengers were **intermediaries of conveyance** (bulūgh) only. They simply conveyed the revelations of Allāh and did so with integrity. They faithfully performed the duty they were entrusted with. They taught beneficial knowledge and righteous action whilst giving people glad tidings and warnings. They were upright, truthful, noble, ethical and moral men who did not fall into major sins. They are not intermediaries who are worshipped or through whom worship is channelled to Allāh. They do not possess any divine attributes, nor did they call people to

worship them. The Christians have lied who claim Jesus (عِيسَىٰ) called to his own worship or to the worship of his mother Mary (مَرْيَمَ). Jesus will declare himself innocent of their worship and repudiate them on the Day of Reckoning. Likewise, they have lied who ascribed repugnant things to the Prophets and Messengers.²⁸

3. Chosen, not philosophers. The Prophets and Messengers are not philosophers or merely shrewd, wise men with strong sensory perception coupled with creative imaginations and strong leadership qualities. Rather, they are **chosen and honoured** by Allāh to convey His message. Prophethood cannot be earned or acquired, it is only bestowed. The divine guidance of the Prophets and Messengers is superior to the speculations and ramblings of the philosophers which generally tend to be their own subjective views strongly shaped and determined by their personal experiences. The unified, coherent message of all the Prophets and Messengers is an indication of their truthfulness. The incoherence and contradiction both between and within the views of philosophers is an indication of their ignorance, confusion and misguidance.

The effect and influence of the teachings of the Prophets and Messengers are unequalled and unrivalled by anything put forth by the philosophers. The mention of the Messengers, such as Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus (عِيسَىٰ) and Muḥammad (صَلَّىٰ اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) has been made great among the nations, and of them Muḥammad (صَلَّىٰ اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) is

²⁸ As for the negative portrayal of the Prophets of Allāh in past scripture and the ascription of reprehensible deeds to them, then all of it comes from the fabrications of the poisoned pens of the scribes. All the Prophets and Messengers were noble, upright, righteous men. They were infallible in matters of revelation and its conveyance. They were secure (ma'ṣūm) from falling into major sin. As for minor sins (errors), the Prophets may fall into them, but they do not persist upon them after being notified by Allāh and repenting. Further, Prophets and Messengers have a much higher standard of uprightness in character than those besides them. Thus, their "minor sins" may comprise of mistakes and errors in judgement—such as choosing the least beneficial of two beneficial options—for which an ordinary person would not be blamed. This is the Islāmic position regarding the status of the Prophets and Messengers.

the most remembered and praised, indicating the truth of his name, which means “the praised one”.²⁹

4. Obedience to the messengers. The Prophets and Messengers were sent to be obeyed, their obedience is commanded by Allāh and entails obedience to Allāh Himself:

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ رَّسُولٍ إِلَّا لِيُطَاعَ بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ

“We sent no Messenger, but to be obeyed by Allāh’s Leave.”(4:64).

And also:

مَنْ يُطِيعِ الرَّسُولَ فَقَدْ أَطَاعَ اللَّهَ

“He who obeys the Messenger has obeyed Allāh.” (4:80)

Hence, the Prophets and Messengers are obeyed in what they command and forbid because everything they convey of revelation, guidance, commands and prohibitions originates with Allāh and does not originate from themselves. Obedience to the Messengers is obedience to Allāh and hence is worship of Allāh. Thus, whoever claims Islām for himself, claims to have love of Allāh and claims to have belief in Muḥammad (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) but refuses to obey and follow him in what he commanded and prohibited is a liar in his claim.

قُلْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تُحِبُّونَ اللَّهَ فَاتَّبِعُونِي يُحْبِبْكُمُ اللَّهُ وَيَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ ذُنُوبَكُمْ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ

رَحِيمٌ قُلْ أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَالرَّسُولَ فَإِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ الْكَافِرِينَ

“Say, [O Muḥammad]: ‘If you love Allāh, then follow me, [so] Allāh will love you and forgive you your sins. And Allāh is Forgiving and Merciful.’ Say, ‘Obey Allāh and the Messenger’ But if they turn away - then indeed, Allāh does not like the disbelievers.” (3:31-32).

Following and obeying the messenger is a sign of genuine belief and genuine love of Allāh.

²⁹ John William Draper, (d. 1882), an American scientist and historian, wrote: “Four years after the death of Justinian, A.D. 569, was born at Mecca, in Arabia, the man who, of all men, exercised the greatest influence upon the human race... Moḥammed.” In “A History of the Intellectual Development of Europe”, 1875, vol.1, pp. 329-330. Draper’s view is also expressed by others who list the Prophet as the most influential man in history, above all other famous people, be they kings, philosophers, leaders, reformists, scientists or religious figures.

So these are general considerations regarding messengership. As for the specific points:

1. **The Messengership of Muḥammad (ﷺ).** Muḥammad³⁰ (ﷺ) is the son of ‘Abdullāh, the son of ‘Abd al-Muṭṭālib, the son of Hāshim and his lineage traces back, through 21 generations, to ‘Adnān who was from the offspring of Ishmael, the son of Abraham. He was sent at a time when the teachings and traces of previous messengers had either been lost or distorted. The pagans of Arabia had inherited many of the deities of the ancients and worshipped them alongside Allāh. The Sabceans worshipped the celestial bodies. The Jews and Christians had departed from the teachings of Moses and Jesus respectively (ﷺ) and altered their religion through distortion of their revealed books and the accumulation of concepts and beliefs from other nations. All other nations had likewise fallen into the worship of other deities besides or alongside Allāh.

From the start of his prophethood in 610 CE at the age of forty and for a period of 13 years in Mecca, the Prophet preached peacefully and patiently to the pagan Arabs who held a variety of different beliefs. He invited them to single out Allāh in worship and shun the worship of deities that have no power over benefit or harm. He spoke against their racism, their maltreatment of slaves, killing of female newborns and other misdeeds. He enjoined benevolence to widows and orphans and the frequent giving of charity. Unfortunately, his message was not in the personal, economic and political interests of the pagans of Mecca. He was met with hostility from his people and his believing companions were boycotted, oppressed, tortured and some were murdered. Attempts were made on his life and he was forced to migrate to what became known as the city of Madīnah in 622 CE. He continued preaching for another ten years whilst facing hostility, plots and the machinations of the polytheists and various forces who formed alliances and initiated wars against him.

Being granted permission to ward off aggression and injustice from himself and his believing companions, he only fought to defend

³⁰ The name ‘Muḥammad’ means *the praised one* and as a matter of fact he is the most mentioned and praised person on Earth, ever.

the instrument of peaceful preaching so that the message of Islām, genuine monotheism and perfection of morals and character, could be heard by others without any hindrance. He never forced a single person to accept Islām against his will.

After inviting the polytheists to Islām, he invited the Jews back to the pure religion of Prophet Moses (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام). Through the Qur'ān, they were reminded of their ancestors from the Children of Israel, how they were favoured when they adhered to right guidance and how their leaders departed from that guidance, opposed their Prophets, distorted their book, entered into magic and the occult and other iniquities. He also argued with the Christians and invited them back to the religion of Prophet Jesus (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام). He explained to them that Jesus was not divine, never claimed to be and never asked to be worshipped. He explained that Jesus called to the worship of the one true deity, Allāh, and none other. That he called to adherence to the law and seeking salvation through works in addition to faith. That his mother was a chaste, truthful, righteous woman who was favoured, honoured and reward by Allāh for her chastity by granting her a son without male intervention. Many from the learned amongst the People of the Book accepted the truth whilst others rejected it knowing full well he was a truthful messenger and was mentioned in their scriptures.

The wars of the Prophet were only against select tribes amongst the Pagans of Arabia, not all of them. The rest of them were waiting and watching to see who would come out on top, upon their conviction that Allāh would not give victory to a liar. Despite all these wars waged to extinguish his message, the Prophet came out victorious and the entire Arabian peninsula entered Islām during the last two years of his prophethood, willingly and without compulsion.

His followers were victorious over the great nations of the time, the Romans and Persians. Islām eventually spread all the way to westernmost Africa, reaching France and Switzerland on one side of the Earth and northern Australia on the other side.³¹

³¹ The spread of Islām, unlike European Christian colonialism, was not accompanied by wholesale extermination of indigenous people. Wherever

2. **Proofs of prophethood.** The proofs of the prophethood of Muḥammad (ﷺ) are many, diverse and not restricted to any one particular matter. Prior to his prophethood he was known to his people as 'the truthful and trustworthy' (al-ṣādiq wal-amīn). He had an impeccable, lofty character, a matter acknowledged by many non-Muslim writers and historians who praised him.³²

An objective, unbiased study and analysis of his biography, his character and his dealings with friend and foe alike will indicate his truthfulness. When one gathers and analyses his information (khabar), command (amr), prohibition (nahī), speech (qawl) and deed (fi'l), there is complete coherence in all of it. An imposter is very quickly exposed through what he informs of, commands, prohibits, says and does. It is not possible for a liar or imposter to maintain honesty, integrity and coherence in all of these five fields without his reality becoming known through interaction with others. Rather, his lies and contradictions would quickly become apparent to people. Hence, the character of Muḥammad (ﷺ), from these various aspects, is the strongest of evidences—aside from the Qur'ān—of his prophethood.

He was granted many miracles which have been reported by large-scale successive transmission through honest and trustworthy reporters and subsequently documented. These reports outnumber and overwhelm the reports of the miracles of previous prophets.

His victory and that of his initial small number of followers over sizeable aggressive enemies and against the most powerful nations of the time, the Romans and Persians, is proof of divine aid. If he had been an imposter or a liar, he would not have been given aid and granted such success. It is not possible for the one who knows he is lying and deceiving others to possess an iron-strong determination and firm resolve without doubting, wavering, faltering and giving up.

the Muslims went, or Islām spread to, the indigenous people remained. In contrast, Europeans massacred and committed systematic genocide against the indigenous people of the Americas, Africa, parts of Asia and Australia.

³² A number of non-Muslim historians (such as John William Draper whose citation has preceded) described Muḥammad (ﷺ) as the most influential man in the whole of history.

His prophecies—numbering in the hundreds—regarding future events and signs which occurred and took place just as he mentioned are also a proof of his truthfulness.

Consideration of his legislation—which protects the necessities of life, property, lineage, honour and intellect and saves individuals, societies and nations from decay and destruction—provides proof of the perfection of his guidance. It demonstrates that such a coherent, effective law could not have been originated by a man.

The greatest proof of his prophethood however, is the Qur'ān, a recital of the spoken words of Allāh. The Qur'ān was received and transmitted orally and is memorised by millions across the world. It is a lasting miracle characterised by inimitability (i'jāz) and stands as an ongoing challenge for all of jinn and men combined to produce its like in eloquence, measured rhythmic beauty, depth of meaning, upright guidance, profound effect upon hearts and souls and many other affairs.

Muḥammad (ﷺ) was mentioned by name in the previous scriptures (in the languages of Hebrew and Aramaic) as מהמד “Muḥammad” (praised) and אהמד “Ahmad” (most praised). But those given scripture concealed this despite having full knowledge of it. Allāh (ﷻ) said regarding them:

الَّذِينَ آتَيْنَاهُمُ الْكِتَابَ يَعْرِفُونَهُ كَمَا يَعْرِفُونَ أَبْنَاءَهُمْ وَإِنَّ فَرِيقًا مِنْهُمْ لَيَكْتُمُونَ
الْحَقَّ وَهُمْ يَعْلَمُونَ

“Those to whom We gave the Scripture know him as they know their own sons. But indeed, a party of them conceal the truth while they know [it].” (2:146).

The learned from the People of the Book knew he was the “chosen one” (Muṣṭafā) and “praised one” (Muḥammad, Aḥmad) named and described in their scriptures.³³ A prophet from the illiterate, from the

³³ By way of example refer to Isaiah 42 which is a clear, unambiguous reference to a Prophet from the Hijāz in Arabia which specifically references the city of Madīnah alongside the qualities, attributes and achievements of the Arabian Prophet to come.

offspring of Kedar (son of Ishmael) who would appear from the deserts of Paran in a dry, arid place (Hijāz, Mecca), glorifying Allāh. He would be the **chosen one** and beloved of Allāh—[two well known names of the Prophet (muṣṭafā, ḥabībullāh)]—sent to a **nation of idol-worshippers**. He would be expelled from his city and be received near **Mount Sela** (Madīnah) by a people who would rejoice at his arrival. With a large group of his followers, he would later return to his city, **victorious over the idolators**, without having faltered or been discouraged until he established justice. His **praise and mention** would be great and he would be given a **new recital or hymn** and come with a **law**.

But a group of the People of the Book rejected him, out of pride though they were convinced he was indeed the Prophet mentioned in their books. Their scripture obligated them to believe in him and aid him because he brought that which they recognised and confirmed the truth in their scriptures.

3. Requirements of this testification. This testification for the messengership of Muḥammad (ﷺ) is an acknowledgement of rights that belong to the Messenger. They include the following:

a) To believe that Muḥammad (ﷺ) was the last and final prophet and messenger sent to all of jinn and men. That he was truthful in whatever he conveyed from his Lord with respect to the affairs of the seen and unseen, the past, present and the future. These affairs include knowledge regarding the Day of Judgement, Paradise, Hellfire, the stories of the prophets and the nations of the past. Likewise to believe he was truthful in all that he conveyed of commands, prohibitions and legislations:

فَأْمِنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ وَالنُّورِ الَّذِي أَنْزَلْنَا

“So believe in Allāh and His Messenger and in the light [of guidance] which we have revealed [to him].” (64:8).

b) To worship Allāh only through the guidance of the Prophet. To obey him in whatever he commanded and prohibited and to take caution against his disobedience as it entails disobedience to Allāh

(عَزَّوَجَلَّ). To limit oneself to his guidance and to his way (sunnah) and to not go beyond that. To refer differences and matters of dispute back to him and to the guidance he came with:

وَمَا آتَاكُمُ الرَّسُولُ فَخُذُوهُ وَمَا نَهَاكُمْ عَنْهُ فَانْتَهُوا

“Whatever the Messenger commands you, take it [and abide by it] and whatever he prohibits you from, refrain from it.” (59:7).

And the Prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) said: “Whoever obeys me has obeyed Allāh and whoever disobeys me has disobeyed Allāh.”³⁴

c) To respect and venerate him (tawqīr, ta‘zīr) with what is due to him in accordance with his status. This entails honouring him and speaking about him within the limits of respect. It means to support him and to shield him from abuse and harm.

فَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا بِهِ وَعَزَّرُوهُ وَنَصَرُوهُ وَاتَّبَعُوا النُّورَ الَّذِي أُنزِلَ مَعَهُ أُولَئِكَ هُمُ

الْمُفْلِحُونَ

“So those who believe in him, honour him, help him, and follow the light (the Qur’ān) which has been sent down with him, it is they who will be successful.” (7:157).

d) To love him more than anything else. The Prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) said, “None of you truly believes until I am more beloved to him than his own father, his son and all of mankind.”³⁵ This is because he is a mercy to humankind and the benefit he brought—in terms of guidance in this world and deliverance in the hereafter—is far greater than all other joys and benefits a person may attain from any other person, be they parents, spouses, children, relatives, kings or leaders. Love of the Prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) is a matter of the heart and its evidences are displayed outwardly in a person’s actions. However, this love is not an exaggerated love such as what the Christians have done with Jesus (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام) until they deified him. Likewise, what many have done with the saints or righteous people, exaggerating in them and turning them into idols that are worshipped alongside Allāh.

³⁴ Related by al-Bukhārī.

³⁵ Related by al-Bukhārī and Muslim.

e) In connection with the previous point: From his rights is that his true status—a humble slave and messenger—is maintained and never exceeded either to the extreme of exaggeration (ghuluww) or to the extreme of neglect and belittlement (taqṣīr). He is the best of all humankind, the most superior of all the Prophets and Messengers, but alongside that he is also a human who does not know the unseen and does not have independent control over harm and benefit. Hence, he was commanded by Allāh to say:

قُلْ لَا أَمْلِكُ لِنَفْسِي نَفْعًا وَلَا ضَرًّا إِلَّا مَا شَاءَ اللَّهُ وَلَوْ كُنْتُ أَعْلَمُ الْغَيْبِ لَأَسْتَكْبَرْتُ
مِنَ الْخَيْرِ وَمَا مَسَّنِيَ السُّوءُ إِنْ أَنَا إِلَّا نَذِيرٌ وَبَشِيرٌ لِّقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ

“Say [O Muḥammad]: ‘I possess no power of benefit or hurt to myself except as Allāh wills. If I had the knowledge of the unseen, I should have secured for myself an abundance of wealth, and no evil should have touched me. I am but a warner, and a bringer of glad tidings to people who believe.’” (7:188).

A Muslim is prohibited from exaggerating in the status of the prophets and righteous as this is the starting point of paths which eventually lead to the greatest crime and injustice, associationism (shirk). The Prophet (ﷺ) placed barriers in front of all avenues which lead to excessive praise, exaggeration and eventual worship of people alongside Allāh, and this is another aspect of the perfection of his guidance.

f) Also from the rights of the Prophet (ﷺ) is to love his companions, his wives and the people of his household. To revile and belittle them is to harm the Prophet (ﷺ). They are mentioned only with goodness. Malice is not harboured towards them and forgiveness is sought for them. To speak ill of them as a whole, or the majority of them and accuse them of misguidance or disbelief, is hypocrisy and disbelief itself. The great Muslim scholar, Imām Aḥmad bin Ḥanbal (d. 855) said: “When you see a man mentioning the Companions of Allāh’s Messenger (ﷺ) with evil, suspect his Islām.”³⁶ There are those who ascribe to Islām whilst hating and reviling the Prophet’s wives and companions, ascribing disbelief to

³⁶ Refer to *al-Bidāyah wal-Nihāyah* of Ibn Kathīr, 8/142.

them. In reality, they are the disbelievers and their association with Islām is one of hypocrisy, not sincerity.³⁷ It is impossible for a genuine believer in Moses (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام) to revile those closest to Moses from his followers and for a genuine believer in Jesus (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام) to revile those closest to Jesus from his followers. Likewise, it is impossible for a genuine believer in Muḥammad (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) to revile those closest to him from his followers.

In conclusion of this chapter, a Muslim must respect and fulfil the rights of the Messenger (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) because there is no way to fulfil the rights of Allāh (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ) except by fulfilling them. This indicates the binding link between Tawḥīd and messengership. It is for this reason that rejection of even a single messenger of Allāh is a rejection of all messengers and of messengership in principle and in turn of Tawḥīd itself, because the two cannot be separated. It is for this reason that the People of the Book became disbelievers in all previous Books and messengers and of the Tawḥīd of Allāh (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ) when they rejected the Prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ).

Next, we discuss the nature of a genuine, valid declaration of Islām and the conditions that make it so. It is important to grasp this affair as it allows a person to understand the various categories of people that exist in relation to this declaration and the nature and reality of their position, state or condition. -

³⁷ They are known as the Rāfiḍah, or the Shī'ah, they have enmity towards the wives and companions of the Prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ).

The Conditions of the Declaration

Now that the meaning of the two testifications has been explained and made clear, it is vital to understand that this declaration—the word (*kalimah*) of Islām by which a person enters Islām—has certain conditions without which it is invalid.

The Muslim scholar, Wahb bin Munabbih (d. 732) said, when asked, “Is not ‘*Lā ilāha illallāh*’ a key to Paradise?” He replied: “Yes, but there is no key except that it has teeth. If you brought a key that has teeth, it will be opened for you, otherwise it will not be opened for you.”³⁸

These conditions are derived from the texts of the Qur’ān and the Prophetic traditions by the scholars of Islām and Tawḥīd and they are seven in number:

- | | |
|-------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. knowledge (‘ilm) | 5. truthfulness (ṣidq) |
| 2. certainty (yaqīn) | 6. sincerity (ikhhlāṣ) |
| 3. acceptance (qabūl) | 7. love (maḥabbah) |
| 4. compliance (inqiyād) | |

The first four conditions are connected and run in a sequence, each following and built upon the one before it. A brief explanation of each condition is provided below.

1. Knowledge (‘ilm). Mere utterance of the declaration of Islām is not sufficient. Rather, a person must have knowledge and understanding of what he or she is expressing such that it cancels out ignorance. A concise explanation of the meaning of the statement, “*Lā ilāha illallāh muḥammad rasūlullāh*” has preceded and comprises the minimal amount of knowledge and understanding a person must possess regarding it. Allāh (ﷻ) said:

فَاعْلَمُ أَنَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ

“Have knowledge therefore, that there is none worthy of worship but Allāh [alone].” (47:19).

This is a command to have knowledge of the meaning of this statement and to understand its reality before declaring it. However, knowledge of the meaning—though a condition—is not sufficient on

³⁸ Related by al-Bukhārī in Kitāb al-Janā’iz.

its own. There is something required in addition to knowledge and it is certainty.

2. Certainty (yaqīn). This is a perfection of the first condition of knowledge. A person must have certainty in what he or she is declaring and be free of doubt, hesitation and wavering. It means to be certain of the truth that there is no deity worthy of being worshipped except Allāh and of the futility of worshipping other deities besides Him. A person may fully grasp something, but may remain unconvinced or doubtful about its truth and not believe in it despite grasping it. Many non-Muslims understand the notion of *pure monotheism (tawhīd) in belief, speech and deed* very well (such as non-Muslim scholars of Islām), but that does not mean they are certain of its truth. Hence, possessing certainty negates doubt and is additional to having mere knowledge of the meaning of the statement. Allāh (عَزَّوَجَلَّ) said:

إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ ثُمَّ لَمْ يَرْتَابُوا

“The believers are only the ones who have believed in Allāh and His Messenger and then doubt not.” (49:15)

This condition indicates that grasping and fathoming something does not equate to having belief in its truthfulness and certainty with respect to it.

3. Acceptance (qabūl). A person may grasp the meaning of the declaration of Islām, and may also be certain and convinced that it is the truth. However, these two conditions would not be sufficient until a person also accepts the requirements of this declaration. It is possible for a person to fully understand the meaning and be certain of its truth but out of arrogance and pride or preference of the world or love of the way of one’s forefathers, tribe or nation, refuse to accept it and what it requires of speech and action. Allāh (عَزَّوَجَلَّ) said of such people:

إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا إِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ يَسْتَكْبِرُونَ

“Truly, when it was said to them: ‘Lā ilāha illāllah’ (none is worthy of worship but Allāh), they displayed arrogance.” (37:35).

Hence, acceptance is a necessary condition, it negates arrogance. It means to accept inwardly that one must respond to and abide by the necessities of this declaration, which are to worship Allāh alone and to do so through what He legislated and commanded by way of His Book and by way of the example of His Messenger (ﷺ).

4. Compliance (inqiyād). Whilst acceptance is inward and is a person's acknowledgement that he or she is obligated to respond to and abide by the requirements of the declaration, compliance is outward and naturally follows from inward acceptance. By complying in one's beliefs, statements and deeds, a person is submitting to Allāh, the very meaning of Islām:

وَمَنْ أَحْسَنُ دِينًا مِمَّنْ أَسْلَمَ وَجْهَهُ لِلَّهِ وَهُوَ مُحْسِنٌ وَاتَّبَعَ مِلَّةَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ حَنِيفًا

“And who is better in religion than one who submits himself to Allāh while being a doer of good and follows the religion of Abraham, inclining toward truth?” (4:125).

Together, inward acceptance and submission (qabūl, istislām) and outward compliance (inqiyād) symbolise the essence of Islām.

As mentioned, these first four conditions run in a sequence and are all connected to each other, each one being built upon the one before it. As for the remaining three conditions, they add further clarity about the nature of genuine belief and serve to remove hypocrisy, dissimulation (insincerity), and love that is not genuine or sincere from genuine belief and what it requires. And they are:

5. Truthfulness (ṣidq). This condition requires that a person is truthful in his or her declaration of Islām and truthful in his or her belief in its meaning. It opposes hypocrisy (nifāq). A person may fully grasp the meaning of the declaration, know and be convinced that it is the truth, yet reject it inwardly whilst pretending to believe and make outward compliance due to some worldly motive or pursuit.

There were people in the time of the Prophet (ﷺ) who expressed Islām outwardly whilst disbelieving inwardly. They did not believe in the Qur’ān or the Prophet (ﷺ) and were motivated to disbelieve inwardly whilst professing belief outwardly due to factors

such as pride, hatred, jealousy and resentment or the desire to protect their worldly interests. Hence, they concealed these affairs and did not manifest them, choosing to manifest belief in order to try and deceive Allāh and the believers. Some of them also strove to extinguish the light of Islām through stealth and intrigue.

Since what is in the heart must manifest itself outwardly, there are recognisable traits of hypocrisy which cannot be reconciled with genuine faith. Many of these traits have been mentioned in the Qur'ān and the Prophetic traditions. Truthfulness is when the inward and outward are in agreement. What is in the heart must agree with what is said by the tongue and performed by the limbs.

Allāh (عَزَّوَجَلَّ) said:

إِذَا جَاءَكَ الْمُتَافِقُونَ قَالُوا نَشْهَدُ إِنَّكَ لَرَسُولُ اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ إِنَّكَ لَرَسُولُهُ وَاللَّهُ يَشْهَدُ إِنَّ الْمُتَافِقِينَ لَكَاذِبُونَ

“When the hypocrites come to you, [O Muḥammad], they say, ‘We testify that you are the Messenger of Allāh.’ And Allāh knows that you are His Messenger, and Allāh testifies that the hypocrites are liars.” (63:1).

The Prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) said: “There is no person who testifies that none has the right to be worshipped but Allāh [alone] and that Muḥammad is the Messenger of Allāh, truthfully from his heart, except that Allāh makes Hellfire unlawful for him.”³⁹

Hence, truthfulness is from the most important of conditions.

6. Sincerity (ikhhlās). Sincerity is to make all of one’s worship for Allāh alone. It is also to purify the heart from showing off and doing deeds to be seen and heard of by others. Allāh (عَزَّوَجَلَّ) said:

وَمَا أُمِرُوا إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ مُخْلِصِينَ لَهُ الدِّينَ حُنَفَاءَ

“And they were not commanded except to worship Allāh, [being] sincere to Him in religion, inclining to truth.” (98:5).

Hence, sincerity is to perform deeds for the sake of Allāh alone and not for the pleasure, praise and acceptance of others. If actions are done for Allāh and also for the sake of other people, then they

³⁹ Related by al-Bukhārī in Kitāb al-‘ilm.

will be rejected because this is associating partners with Allāh. Allāh is greater and more worthy than that deeds should be done both for Him and for others alongside Him. Such deeds are rejected by Allāh because they are not done sincerely for His sake alone. For example, a person may pray, recite the Qur’ān skilfully or give lots of charity, intending by that to be seen, heard and praised by people. This is known as *riyā’* (showing off) and *sum’ah* (seeking a reputation, to be spoken of by people) and is a major sin.

A sign of major hypocrisy—which entails disbelief—is when the *overwhelming majority* of a person’s deeds are for show.

7. Love (maḥabbah). A person loves the truth which is the declaration that nothing has the right to be worshipped but Allāh alone. He or she also loves to abide by its requirements, and loves those who believe and act upon it. A sign of love is that a person follows and implements the guidance of the Messenger:

قُلْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تُحِبُّونَ اللَّهَ فَاتَّبِعُونِي يُحْبِبْكُمُ اللَّهُ وَيَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ ذُنُوبَكُمْ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ

رَحِيمٌ

“Say [O Muḥammad]: ‘If you (really) love Allāh then follow me, Allāh will love you and forgive you of your sins. And Allāh is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.’” (3:31).

Any claim of inward love, devoid of outward following and compliance is an empty claim. It is like a husband claiming to love his wife or a father claiming to love his child, yet not a single outward expression of love—in speech or deed—has ever emanated from him. This is impossible. The claim that faith is only in the heart is false. Rather, faith is belief, speech and deed, and all of this must be in agreement with authentic Prophetic guidance.

In summary, these are the seven conditions of the declaration of Islām which a Muslim must learn, know, understand and apply because they entail preservation of true, sound, acceptable religion. They provide a Muslim with a key that has “teeth” enabling him or her to open the door to Paradise.

Once, this is clear, we should then realise that sound, authentic religion (*dīn ṣaḥīḥ*) is comprised of two core elements:

The Nature and Reality of Worship

The two testifications which comprise the essence of Islām can be summarised as the **two foundational** elements of sound religion:

First: That Allāh is exclusively worshipped alone, no partners are associated with Him in worship. As for the types of worship, they are many and include, by way of example: love (maḥabbah), fear (khawf), hope (rajā'), reliance (tawakkul), bowing (rukū'), prostration (sujūd), prayer (ṣalāt), invocation (du'ā), seeking aid (isti'ānah), soliciting rescue (istighāthah). Worship is inward, in the heart, consisting of its belief and its feelings, emotions and states. And it is also outward, on the tongue and limbs, consisting of utterances and deeds. True, lasting satisfaction and serenity only settle and remain in the heart through the worship and remembrance of Allāh.

Second: That He is not worshipped except through what He legislated. Acts of worship follow the principles of legislation (shar') and imitation (ittibā') of the Messenger of Allāh (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) in what he conveyed of the law. It is not for anyone to worship Allāh except through what His Messenger legislated of the obligatory and recommended deeds. He is not worshipped through innovated statements and actions for which He gave no authority as this leads to alteration and distortion of true religion. This is what the Jews and Christians fell into when they innovated into their religion.

Thus every act of worship must be founded upon pure monotheistic belief, directed only to Allāh, done sincerely for His sake and be in agreement with the Prophetic guidance regarding its details, both the general and specific.

The message of the Prophets combines between these two foundations with the second being a means for the fulfilment of the first.⁴⁰ Islām—to worship Allāh alone and to worship Him only through what He legislated and ordered—is the way of Abraham, Isaac, Ishmael, Jacob, Moses, David, Solomon, the Israelite prophets, Jesus and Muḥammad (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ).

⁴⁰ In Islām, whilst deeds are essential to faith and are required for salvation, they are not the sole, independent cause. None will enter Paradise except through the grace, mercy and forgiveness of Allāh.

True and False Religion

From what has preceded, we should know that correct religion is to worship Allāh alone and only through what He legislated via His messengers. Corrupt religion is to: a) worship others besides Allāh, which is **associationism** (shirk) or b) to worship Allāh through acts of worship having no general or specific basis in revealed texts and this is **innovation** (bid'ah).

Further, sound religion combines between beneficial knowledge and righteous action. Knowledge without deeds earns wrath. Deeds performed upon ignorance, in absence of knowledge, is misguidance. Salvation [after the grace and mercy of Allāh] is through beneficial knowledge and righteous action combined and this is because of the necessary and inseparable connection between the heart and the body. What is in the heart of knowledge, conviction and submission must manifest outwardly on the limbs and what is performed by the limbs in turn must have a necessary impact upon what is in heart. Thus, the states of love, fear, hope, reliance and others in the heart must manifest outwardly, as righteous deeds. And outward deeds such as remembrance, prayer, seeking forgiveness, repentance, charity, prayer in turn have a real, tangible effect upon the heart. It is impossible for faith to settle in the heart without outward manifestation on the tongue and limbs unless there are preventive barriers in the heart which constitute disbelief such as arrogance (kibr) or hypocrisy (nifāq).

Whoever believes that by mere utterance of the two testifications alone a person is automatically saved and will never enter Hellfire, despite having the opportunity to act, has opposed the Book, the Prophetic tradition and consensus. Rather, a person only deserves entry into Paradise and deliverance from Hellfire through inward belief and acceptance *coupled with* outward observance and compliance through the obligations.

This leads us to reframe the two testifications into a number of criteria that separate between true and false religion. They can be formulated in the form of the following questions:

- a) Who or what do you worship?
- b) How do you worship?

c) How do you attain salvation and Paradise?

d) What is the source of your religion?

Through these questions we are able to evaluate all religions. Thus true religion, Islām, is that you worship none but Allāh alone; that you worship Him only through what He legislated; that you attain Paradise through righteous deeds [though Allāh's grace and mercy are the ultimate cause of salvation]; and that your source of guidance is uncorrupted revelation from Allāh (عَزَّوَجَلَّ).

Anything besides true, authentic religion will fail one or more of these criteria and this is further explained through the following illustrations:

a) When there is denial of a creator from the outset such as what is found in the religions of **Atheism**, **Materialism** and **Philosophical Naturalism**. These are conjectural, speculative, pessimistic belief systems concealed behind the veil of science to give them a cloak of authenticity and authority. They are cleverly defined as "absence of belief in a creator" so as to avoid the burden of proof being applied to them. They are more accurately defined as "belief in the absence of a creator". This is of course pure conjecture for which they have no proof. In order to explain creation, they ascribe divine qualities to nature and matter in a cryptic manner, through complex, technical language.⁴¹ The only difference between them and the primitives is

⁴¹ Upon basic reflection it is clear there are **wisdoms** (ḥikam) in creation. Millions of intertwined cause effect mechanisms can be identified at every level in between the cosmic and the microscopic and molecular levels. This indicates **intended purposes** in created entities. This in turn indicates the existence of the attribute of knowledge ('ilm) and the exercise of will (irādah) and power (qudrah). From here, the dispute is about to whom or what these attributes and actions should be ascribed. There are only two possibilities. Either to a being external to the universe or to nature and matter itself. Innate disposition (fiṭrah), sensory perception (ḥiss), reason ('aql) and the sum of all human industrial enterprise in history indicate that wisdoms and intended purposes only come from an entity possessing these attributes. Materialists and atheists reject this by claiming all apparent design and purpose is merely an illusion. They then proceed to outline conjectures regarding origins of the universe and origins of life which cannot be empirically tested and in which matter is given these very same

that the primitives worshipped nature after giving it divine qualities, whereas these moderns give nature divine qualities to explain away the Creator so as to escape from having to worship Him, out of pride and arrogance. Both the ancient primitives and the modern primitives are guilty of associationism (shirk). The ancients were associationists in both Allāh's lordship (rubūbiyyah) and right of worship (ulūhiyyah). The moderns ascribe divine qualities to nature—and this is their associationism in Allāh's lordship—out of pure arrogance, to justify their disbelief and their rejection of His right of worship (ulūhiyyah).

The primitives were more coherent than the arrogant moderns from one angle and the moderns are shrewder than the primitives from another angle.

b) Erecting and worshipping other deities such as what is found in **Hinduism**, which is a pantheistic⁴² or panentheistic⁴³ belief system comprising an inbred racist element, or **Christianity** in which Jesus (عيسى السلام) is made divine and worshipped alongside Allāh. Some sects like the Catholics also worship Mary (مريم السلام), the mother of Jesus, as well as saints. Monotheism is not simply the belief in only one, supreme creator since the majority of the inhabitants of the earth already acknowledge this through innate disposition. Rather, monotheism is to single out this creator alone with all forms and types of worship. This was the call of Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus and Muḥammad (صلى الله عليه وسلم) and all prophets. Other polytheistic religions include **Kemetism**, a modern revival of ancient Egyptian paganism and worship of Thoth, Ma'at and Rā (the sun god). Likewise,

attributes. This is done in a highly cryptic manner through the use of deceptive technical language as a means of concealing the fact that they are just sophisticated versions of the ancient primitives who gave nature divine qualities.

⁴² The belief that all of reality is equal to God, that everything which exists is a divine manifestation and there is no such thing as God and "His creation". Concisely, *all is God*.

⁴³ The belief that the universe is contained within God who enters and interpenetrates it. Concisely, *all is within God*.

Shintoism, a Japanese ethnic religion in which spirits, essences and gods are worshipped.

c) What is found in **Buddhism** which denies an inherent purpose for life and as such does not teach belief in gods, asserting they are cultural in origin but may be used as part of one's spiritual development. Hence it is atheistic in principle but allows incorporation of gods for the attainment of its primary goal: to remove suffering by escaping the continuous cycle of death and rebirth through ethical precepts in order to reach the state of "nirvana" (liberation). Any system of spirituality that is not based on a Creator and pure monotheism is false and defective.

d) When it is claimed that superiority or salvation is based around tribe and race such as what is found within **Judaism** of the concept of "the chosen people" or with the black nationalist supremacists such as the **Nation of Islām** (a spurious title)⁴⁴ or the **Black Hebrew Israelites** whose teachings revolve around resentment, anger and hatred on the basis of race and events of history.

e) When religion is based upon a distorted, corrupted, altered scripture such as what is found with the **Jews** and **Christians** who altered the Torah and Gospel respectively and worship through other than what Allāh revealed and legislated. In **Rabbinic Judaism**, the Rabbis assume divine character and authority, claiming that Allāh continues to speak and reveal to the Jews through them. The Jews and Christians innovated into their religion, distorted their scripture, worshipped Allāh with beliefs and actions for which He gave no authority and abandoned much of what they were commanded with.

f) In the absence of revelation and prophethood—the sources of authentic, true religion—such as what is found with **Sikhism** which is

⁴⁴ The Nation of Islām are not Muslims but imposters using the name of Islām to conceal their heretical and idolatrous beliefs. They believe that God was incarnated in the form of Elijah Muhammad (d. 1975), that black people are divine whilst white men are devils. They have many beliefs that clash with the revealed books and the teachings of the prophets and messengers.

a philosophical system devised by men by combining what they borrowed from other religions. It is not free of pantheistic or panentheistic elements influenced by Hinduism with a confusing incoherent, contradictory, speculative theology. If it had been true religion based on genuine, uncorrupted revelation, such incoherence in its basic teachings about the Creator would not be found.

The above are merely illustrations and the reader should be able to apply the aforementioned criteria in a like manner to evaluate any religion of choice.

In conclusion, Islām is the name of *true religion*. Allāh (عَزَّوَجَلَّ) said:

أَفَعَبِّرْ دِينَ اللَّهِ يَتَّبِعُونَ وَ لَهُ أَسْلَمَ مَنْ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ طَوْعًا وَكَرْهًا وَإِلَيْهِ يُرْجَعُونَ

“Do they seek other than [Islām], the religion of Allāh, while to Him submit all creatures in the Heavens and the Earth, willingly or unwillingly, and to Him shall they all be returned?” (3:83).

This is known through its meaning which is submitting to the will of the Creator [guided by authentic revealed knowledge that enjoins beneficial righteous action]. Islām is a state of being and hence, is not defined by or restricted to a location, race, tribe or individual.

Judaism and Christianity are not the names by which Moses and Jesus (عَلَيْهِمَا السَّلَام) referred to their teachings. Judaism is based on tribalism and the name of “Christianity” which is Greek in origin is based around the person of Jesus. Hinduism is named after a geographic region. Buddhism is named after its founder, Siddhartha Gautama, whilst Sikhism has a strong ethnic character to it.

The names of religions besides Islām generally follow this pattern. All the Prophets and Messengers called to Islām and they were *Muslims*, those who submit to the will of Allāh and serve Him. The religion acceptable to Allāh has no other name but *Islām*.

The Remaining Four Pillars of Islām

By uttering the two testifications a person has established the first and greatest pillar and is thereby required to establish the remaining four pillars. We shall discuss them briefly here from the angle of their goals, benefits and virtues rather than their practical details which can be learned separately.

Purification (ṭahārah) and the five daily prayers (ṣalāh). Just as worship is invalid in the absence of monotheism (tawḥīd), prayer is invalid in the presence of impurity. Islām is founded upon purity, whether doctrinal, spiritual or physical. Purification is one half of faith and is the key to prayer just as pure monotheism is the foundation of Islām and the key to worship.

The prayer is obligatory upon every male and female who has reached the age of maturity. It is performed at set times in a state of physical purity through ablution (wuḍū') wherein the hands, face, arms and feet are washed. The prayer consists of actions, statements and feelings and include standing, bowing, prostrating, supplicating, remembering, sincerity, love, hope, humility, awe and other affairs which make it the greatest pillar after the two testifications. It is of tremendous impact upon the heart, soul and body and restrains from improper conduct.

Allāh (عَزَّوَجَلَّ) said:

إِنَّ الصَّلَاةَ تَنْهَىٰ عَنِ الْفَحْشَاءِ وَالْمُنْكَرِ

“Indeed [establishing] the prayer prevents from immorality and wrongdoing.” (29:45)

Every limb and organ is a recipient of the favours and blessings of Allāh. The prayer involves the entire body with all the major limbs of the body engaged in worship and gratitude. The prayer washes away sins, purifies the heart and soul, brings one closer to his or her Lord and provides serenity and satisfaction to the heart.

Fasting (ṣawm). Fasting is to withhold from food, drink, sexual relations and all unlawful deeds between dawn and sunset for thirty days during the month of Ramaḍān. It is a month of tremendous

mercy and blessing in which a Muslim increases in remembrance, prayer and charity. It leads a person to increase in piety.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الصِّيَامُ كَمَا كُتِبَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ

“O you who have believed, decreed upon you is fasting as it was decreed upon those before you that you may become pious.” (2:183).

Fasting comprises many tremendous benefits and wisdoms. It helps one to develop sympathy for the poor and needy of the world and in turn, to become more appreciative and grateful for the favours and bounties of Allāh. It leads a person to become more patient and disciplined. Numerous health benefits of fasting are often mentioned by some, but they are only secondary in nature and are not the primary reason for the legislation of fasting.

Obligatory charity (zakāh). A Muslim who has wealth stored and unused for a year that reaches a certain threshold value must give a small amount of it—one fortieth (2.5%)—in obligatory charity. It is payable only on certain types of wealth such as gold, silver, cash, agricultural products, livestock and trade inventories. Zakāh purifies one's wealth, instils generosity and kindness, makes one detached from wealth with the realisation that all wealth is the property of Allāh, is only of temporary possession and will not be taken to the grave. The society benefits through redistribution of wealth from where it is not needed to where it is needed most, leading to a stimulation in the economy through constant movement of wealth. This is achieved without impoverishing the wealthy.

Pilgrimage (Ḥajj). The final pillar is the pilgrimage to Mecca which is obligatory for those who have the financial means to perform it. A series of rituals are performed at a specific time during the last month of the Islāmic calendar, Dhul-Ḥijjah, at specified locations. They are a reminder of the series of trials faced by Abraham (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ), the pure, upright monotheist. The pilgrimage is replete with lessons in monotheism, purification of the soul, patience, sacrifice, racial equality and harmony, unity and much more.

The Six Pillars of Īmān (Faith)

We have completed our discussion of Islām. Islām is outward. All of its pillars are statements and deeds which are heard and observed by others. Inward belief, truthfulness, sincerity and acceptance of the heart validate outward Islām. Their absence would turn any outward display of Islām into hypocrisy.

Hence, a **minimal threshold** of inward belief is required to validate the outward Islām, and the heart is the seat of that belief. What the heart contains of beliefs, states, feelings and actions is hidden and is known only to Allāh.

The minimal threshold of inward belief relates to the two testifications as has preceded and then around six pillars of belief. There is a generalised belief which a Muslim must have with respect to each of these pillars. These six pillars relate to what is *unseen*. Meaning, what cannot be experienced with the senses in the life of this world. Believing in the unseen is the first quality of the believer mentioned in the Qur'ān. Believing in the unseen is rational and warranted. There is no person on earth but must believe in what cannot be seen or perceived, either because they are not present to see it or because it cannot be seen due to limitations in vision.⁴⁵

Allāh cannot be seen in this life though He can be known in a limited way through the effects and traces of His actions of creating and regulating. Allāh reveals more detailed knowledge of Himself through revelation. Beings which Allāh created and are outside the realm of human perception, such as angels and jinn, also cannot be seen. The previous revealed books and sent messengers are from the unseen for us as we were not present to witness them. The Last Day, the Day of

⁴⁵ Scientists believe in the unseen and invent forces and particles which are hypothetical and undetectable. Though they cannot see these things because of physical impossibility, they nevertheless try to detect them indirectly, by tracing their effects. Atheists like Richard Dawkins speak of the plausibility of aliens from other worlds as a means of explaining life on earth. This also implies belief in the unseen. Evolutionists whose doctrine is built upon the claim that a self-replicating cell arose through pure random interactions also believe in the unseen. No one can escape from believing in at least something from the unseen.

Judgement, is a matter of the unseen. The Divine Decree, that Allāh created His creation through natural laws, through cause-effect mechanism, gave everything its due form, its properties and precise measure and has all-encompassing, perfect knowledge of what occurred, is occurring and is yet to occur, is also a matter of the unseen requiring faith. The six pillars are mentioned in the following two verses, first the statement of Allāh (عَزَّوَجَلَّ):

وَلَكِنَّ الْبِرَّ مَنْ آمَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَالْمَلَائِكَةِ وَالْكِتَابِ وَالنَّبِيِّينَ

“But righteousness is [the quality of] the one who believes in Allāh, the Last Day, the Angels, the Books and the Prophets.” (2:177).

And also:

إِنَّا كُلَّ شَيْءٍ خَلَقْنَاهُ بِقَدَرٍ

“Indeed, all things have we created with predetermined, due measure.” (54:49).

We will briefly outline the minimal amount of faith a person must have for each of these six pillars.

1. Belief in Allāh. A discussion of belief in Allāh has preceded in the explanation of the two testifications. We can summarise the essential elements here. Belief in Allāh is to have faith in His absolute oneness and uniqueness. He is **unique in His lordship** (al-rubūbiyyah), **unique in His names and attributes** (al-asmā’ wal-ṣifāt) and on the basis of these two, **unique in His right to worship** (ulūhiyyah). Thus, Allāh is one and unique in His dominion and His actions of creating, owning, regulating and providing, **having no partner** (sharīk) therein. He is unique in His names and attributes, **having no equal** (naẓīr) therein. And He is one and unique in His right to be worshipped, **having no rival** (nidd) therein. Thus, a Muslim believes that Allāh is singled out with all forms and types of worship including love, fear, hope, reliance, supplication, bowing, prostrating and so on.

2. Belief in the Angels. To have firm belief that the angels are a creation from Allāh’s creations and are honourable servants.

They have bodies made of imperceptible light and are able to take on forms and appearances. They possess great strength and also have the ability to travel at great velocities. By their nature, they worship

Allāh, only ever obey Him and never disobey Him. They have reason and understanding and have the qualities of knowledge, nobility and humility amongst others. They inhabit the heavens and never tire of worship. They do not have independent power to create or regulate but they are entrusted with tasks and duties in Allāh's creation. Some angels, such as Gabriel (Jibrīl), are entrusted with revelation. Others, such as Michael (Mīkā'il), with rain and plants, vegetation. Another angel, Isrāfīl, is tasked with blowing the horn to signal the arrival of the Last Day. Others are tasked with taking souls at death. Others with the mountains or what is in the wombs. Others are scribes that record and others are keepers of Paradise and Hellfire. From having faith in the angels is to love them and have loyalty to them. Through them, Allāh operates His creation and they symbolise His power, majesty and grandeur. It is unlawful to worship them or to channel worship through them. They are no more than humble servants.

3. Belief in Revealed Books. To have firm belief in the various books that Allāh revealed to His messengers. These books comprise His speech and convey truth, light and guidance. The revealed books establish the **uncreated attribute of speech** (kalām) for Allāh. Since His essence is uncreated, then all of His attributes are uncreated, as are His actions.

The revealed books include the Scrolls (Ṣuḥuf) of Abraham, the Torah (Tawrāt) given to Moses, the Psalms (Zābūr) given to David, the Gospel (Injīl) given to Jesus and the Recital (Qur'ān) given to Muḥammad (صلى الله عليه وسلم). The foundation of all revealed books and divine legislation are the Torah and the Qur'ān. The Psalms of David were a prelude for the Gospel (Injīl) and the Gospel was a prelude for the Qur'ān.

The previous books underwent alteration, addition, deletion and distortion, whilst others were lost. All previous books are abrogated by the Qur'ān which corroborates and affirms whatever truth they contain in their present form. Hence, a Muslim has a generalised belief in the original revelations of these books. He does not affirm anything in the current versions of what are claimed to be the revelations given to Moses and Jesus (عليهما السلام) unless it agrees with

the Qur'ān and the Prophetic traditions. As for whatever is besides this, a Muslim neither rejects nor affirms it.

The Qur'ān is a recital and is not primarily a written text. It was memorised by thousands and then transmitted orally (as well as in secondary written form) through each generation till today where millions of Muslims have the entire text memorised. If every printed or electronic copy of the Qur'ān was erased instantly, the Muslims, through collaboration, would have it rewritten from memory within the hour. This is just one of the numerous aspects of its unique, miraculous, inimitable nature. The Qur'ān is guidance, mercy and light and guides to that which is upright.

4. Belief in the Messengers. To have firm belief that messengers have been sent to every nation inviting them to worship Allāh alone and reject false deities. To believe they were upon truth and guidance and were given signs and evidences to establish their truthfulness and the truth of the message they were sent with. To believe that they conveyed their message as entrusted and were aided and supported by Allāh against their unjust enemies. Some of these messengers have been named and others have not. Hence, one must believe in all of them with a generalised belief without separating or distinguishing between them in principle.

From the greatest of these messengers are the five resolute messengers, so described in the Qur'ān, and they are Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus (عَلَيْهِمُ السَّلَام) and Muḥammad (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ). They possessed tremendous resolve, patience and diligence and were greatly tested.

The previous prophets named in the Qur'ān are:

- | | | |
|------------|-------------|---------------|
| 1. Adam | 10. Jacob | 19. Jonah |
| 2. Idrīs | 11. Joseph | 20. Elias |
| 3. Noah | 12. Shu'ayb | 21. Elisha |
| 4. Hūd | 13. Aaron | 22. Zechariah |
| 5. Šāliḥ | 14. Moses | 23. John |
| 6. Lot | 15. David | 24. Jesus |
| 7. Abraham | 16. Solomon | |
| 8. Ishmael | 17. Job | |
| 9. Isaac | 18. Ezekiel | |

All of the Prophets and Messengers were created men. They were not divine, did not claim to be and never called to their own worship. Like all other humans, they ate food, drank water and were subject to illnesses. Allāh favoured them with prophethood or messengership and aided them with miracles. They were upright, noble men who were not known to commit major sins.⁴⁶ There are three categories amongst them: Prophets, Prophet-kings and Slave-messengers. The Slave-messengers are the most superior. The most superior within this category is Muḥammad (ﷺ) and then the remaining four resolute messengers: Noah, Abraham, Moses and Jesus (عليه السلام). While it is impermissible to distinguish between them in the *foundation* of prophethood—in regards to which they are equal—some of them nevertheless may excel over others in one aspect or more. The most complete and perfect of them is Muḥammad (ﷺ), the Seal of the Prophets and Messengers.

A believer must show love and loyalty towards all of them, believe in their excellences and virtues, defend their honours from ridicule and mockery, and invoke peace, blessings and mercy upon them. To disbelieve in one of them is to disbelieve in all of them and to show enmity to one of them is to show enmity to all of them.

A unique aspect of Muḥammad's (ﷺ) messengership is that he was sent to all jinn and men with the final revelation, the Qur'ān. His call was universal and was not restricted to his own people. Every claim to prophethood after Muḥammad (ﷺ) is a futile claim whose futility is recognised easily, through simple analysis.⁴⁷

5. Belief in the Last Day. To have firm belief in the Day of Judgement in which people will be resurrected, held to account for their deeds and recompensed, good with good and evil with evil, with complete and perfect justice being established and no one being wronged even an atom's weight. Belief in the Day of Judgement incorporates belief

⁴⁶ The Torah is replete with evil lies and fabrications against some of the Prophets that were inserted by the lying, oppressive pens of the scribes.

⁴⁷ The claim that there is another prophet after Muḥammad (ﷺ)—such as the claim of the Aḥmadīs (Qādiyānīs) that Mirza Ghulām Aḥmad (d. 1908) was a prophet—constitutes pure, original disbelief (kufr).

in other affairs such as the **minor and major signs** of the Day of Judgement, what happens in the **grave**, and the various events taking place on the Day of Judgement—such as the **gathering**, the **drinking pool**, the **scales**, the **bridge over Hellfire**, and various **intercessions**—until those destined for Paradise enter Paradise and those destined for Hellfire enter Hellfire.

Evidence for the plausibility of resurrection is all around us in the continuous, repeat cycles of birth, death and rebirth of living things. In the Qur'ān, Allāh (عَزَّوَجَلَّ) draws attention to these realities by giving similitudes for the resurrection to show that it is not far-fetched. The mechanism(s) through which it will occur are like the mechanisms of revival we routinely witness and experience around us:

وَاللَّهُ الَّذِي أَرْسَلَ الرِّيحَ فَتُثِيرُ سَحَابًا فَمَسُقْنَاہُ إِلَىٰ بَلَدٍ مَّيِّتٍ فَأُحْيِنَا بِهِ الْأَرْضَ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا كَذَٰلِكَ النُّشُورُ

“And it is Allāh who sends the winds, and they stir and raise the clouds, and We drive them to a dead land and give life thereby to the earth after its lifelessness. Thus will be the resurrection.” (35:9).

Reflection upon such phenomena are a reminder of the ease with which Allāh gives life to things after their death.

Belief in the Last Day bears numerous fruits, from them:

a) It makes a person become eager for righteousness and to aspire for Allāh's pleasure and reward.

b) It consoles a person in that whatever he misses out on in this life, he or she will receive that which is better, greater and more lasting in the next.

c) It allows a person to perceive and feel the justice of Allāh in that everyone will be recompensed in accordance with his or her actions and even if wrongdoers escape justice in this life, they will not escape it in the next.⁴⁸

⁴⁸ Denial of resurrection—as is found with naturalists, materialists and atheists—leads to a dark, pessimistic, gloomy outlook in life and invites people to take as much advantage of this life as possible at the expense of the lives and welfare of others. Thus, the greatest mass murders in history took place at the hands of atheistic communists in the 20th century.

6. Belief in the Divine Determination and Decree. To have firm belief that Allāh has all-encompassing prior knowledge of all that is to occur in His creation. That all things (natural laws and cause-effect mechanisms) have been created with precise measure and nothing takes place except through His creation and command. That good and evil, life and death, health and sickness, belief and disbelief have been decreed to occur in accordance with His foreknowledge and wisdom. That He is the doer of whatever He wills, whatever He wills occurs and whatever He does not will does not occur.

There are four levels to belief in divine determination and decree:

a) To believe in Allāh's **all-encompassing knowledge** ('ilm) of all existing and non-existing things (whether possible or impossible) and the when and how of all that has taken place or is yet to take place, and of all that has not or will not take place but which if it had, when and how it would have taken place.

b) To believe that Allāh's knowledge of all that is to occur has been **written down** in a register known as the Preserved Tablet (al-lawḥ al-maḥfūz).

c) To believe in Allāh's **all-inclusive will** (mashī'ah), such that whatever He wills occurs and whatever He does not will does not occur.

d) To believe in Allāh's **all-encompassing creative power** (khalq). He brings things into existence and makes things happen at the precise moment He wills them through His total control over matter, energy, forces, natural laws and all cause-effect mechanisms.

All of these levels are indicated in the Qur'ān.⁴⁹

There is nothing in this which implies lack of choice and free will or injustice and this is known by a couple of simple analogies:

First, when a person has a choice to travel through and reside in a pleasant, peaceful town in which one's safety and welfare is guaranteed, he or she will make the informed, rational choice to travel through it as opposed to a town of crime, violence, theft and

⁴⁹ Refer to (65:12) for knowledge; (22:70), (36:12) for the record; (36:82), (81:29) for will; and (39:62), (37:96) for creative power.

murder, when both options are readily available. Second, when any person is wronged by another in relation to his or her person or possessions, he or she demands justice—which implies that the one who committed the wrong was acting with free will. A wronged person never says, “Since the wrongdoer had no free will, I will not demand justice.” Had this been the case, then the concept of justice would be non-existent, all laws would be void and all personal rights would be abolished. But no one ever thinks likes or acts upon the basis of such thoughts. As such, day to day human conduct falsifies such a claim.

Hence, free will is established for everyone. However, since Allāh created humans and gave them the faculties of hearing, seeing, feeling, reflecting, choosing, willing and doing, then He is the creator of their actions, whilst they are the doers of their actions. They do not and cannot escape the all-encompassing knowledge, all-inclusive will and all-encompassing creative power of Allāh. At the same time, they are never compelled in their actions. Allāh sent books and messengers to show them the path of safety and the path of harm, allowing them to freely and readily choose between guidance and misguidance, truth and falsehood.

Injustice would have been if Allāh had judged and then rewarded and punished purely on the basis of His prior knowledge alone, without His creatures having the ability and opportunity to choose and act. Hence, He created them, gave them the aforementioned faculties and sent them guidance, allowing them to freely choose without compulsion. They will be held accountable and rewarded or punished on the basis of their chosen actions, not on the basis of Allāh’s prior knowledge alone. Hence, there is no injustice at all.

There were some amongst the Philosophers and astray Muslim sects who claimed that Allāh has no knowledge of events before they happen or that He only knows the universals, the general details (such as the general existence of men, trees and birds) but not the particulars, the specifics (such as a specific man, tree or bird, by name or type). This is disbelief (kufr) and invalidates Islām.

There were others who claimed that man is *the creator* of his own actions and that Allāh has no creative power or role in man's actions. This is tantamount to affirming two creators as is done by the Magian fire-worshippers who believe in a god of light and good and a god of darkness and evil. It is to put man outside the all-inclusive will and creative power of Allāh, which means that creators exist outside the domain of His will and power, beyond His control and subjugation. They invented this claim upon false reasoning, asserting that if man wills and acts within the domain of Allāh's will and creative power, then reward and punishment cannot be justified and also, that in such a case, *evil deeds* would be ascribed to Allāh.

The truth in this matter is that Allāh is **the creator** of man and his deeds, but not **the doer** of man's deeds. Allāh is the creator of all matter, energy, natural laws and cause-effect mechanisms through which man comes to be, exists, subsists, lives, thinks, reflects, speaks, chooses and acts. He cannot escape such laws and is bound by them. Hence, Allāh is **the creator** of man and his actions, good or bad, and man is merely the performer, **the doer** of his actions, not the creator. When a person gives charity, Allāh created that act because He created that person's body, its powers, abilities and its attributes. But it is the person who performed the act with his limbs. Likewise, when a person steals or murders someone, it was Allāh who created the act, but it was the person who physically performed the act, not Allāh:

وَاللَّهُ خَلَقَكُمْ وَمَا تَعْمَلُونَ

“And Allāh created you and that which you [make or] do.” (37:96)

Allāh is the creator of all men's deeds and evil is not ascribed to Him because in relation to His acts of creating there are wisdoms.⁵⁰

⁵⁰ Everything that we see to be “evil” in this world—such as oppression, death, disease and calamities—is evil in relation to us, but in terms of Allāh's actions of creating and allowing it, there are wisdoms. Thus, by death, life is appreciated; by poverty, prosperity is appreciated; by sickness, health is appreciated; by injustice, justice is appreciated; by evil, good is appreciated. Everything takes on meaning and purpose due to these contrasting affairs, and truth and justice arise through them. This is all from the wisdom of Allāh. Evil is not ascribed to Him at all. When a surgeon performs on a patient (who chose an unhealthy lifestyle and fell ill) and inflicts pain in the

Evil only emanates and resides within His creation. Thus, it is said about the deeds of men, "evil". But in relation to Allāh's actions of allowing evil deeds to take place, it is said "for a wisdom". Such wisdoms are sometimes mentioned in the revealed texts:

ظَهَرَ الْفَسَادُ فِي الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ بِمَا كَسَبَتْ أَيْدِي النَّاسِ لِيُذِيقَهُمْ بَعْضَ الَّذِي عَمِلُوا
لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُونَ

"Evil has appeared on the land and sea because of what the hands of people have earned so that He may let them taste part of [the consequence of] what they have done that perhaps they will return [to righteousness]." (30:41).

Sometimes the wisdoms may be known to us in a general or specific sense and sometimes hidden from or obscure to us.

Ibn al-Qayyim (d. 1350) said regarding the above verse: "Every time the people commit an oppression (ẓulm) or sin (fujūr), their Lord (تَبَارَكَ وَتَعَالَى) brings about calamities and deficiencies in their [means of] nourishment, fruits, climate, water streams, in their bodies and in their forms, shapes, appearances as well as their manners. [He brings about] such deficiencies and calamities that are necessary products of their actions, of their oppression [against each other] and their sin... Every time they commit a sin, Allāh brings for them a punishment, as was said by some of the Salaf: 'Every time you commit a sin, Allāh will bring upon you a punishment by way of His ruler [on Earth].'"⁵¹

Thus, in Allāh's actions there are far-reaching wisdoms which may not always be knowable, and hence, the statement of Allāh (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ):

لَا يُسْأَلُ عَمَّا يَفْعَلُ وَهُمْ يُسْأَلُونَ

process, then in relation to the patient it is painful and evil, but in relation to the surgeon, his act is an act of wisdom and benefit.

⁵¹ *Badā'i' al-Fawā'id* (2/161-162). All rulers on Earth who rule over people have been placed by Allāh in accordance with His Divine wisdom and decree. They are His rulers and He places them in accordance with the nature and realities of their subjects. Further, the qualities, manners and traits of people are in accordance with the degrees of presence or absence of oppression and sin amongst them. These affairs are in turn inseparably linked to the presence or absence, the strength or weakness of the heart's veneration of Allāh (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ). And this returns back to the affairs of Tawhīd which the Messengers were sent with.

“He is not questioned about what He does, but they will be questioned.” (21:23).

There is nothing but complete justice in the decrees and actions of Allāh (عَزَّوَجَلَّ) and it is ignorance and arrogance to question them.

There are many fruits of belief in divine determination and decree and they include:

a) Encouragement to depend upon Allāh (tawakkul) by adopting the ways and means since He is the Creator of all natural laws and cause-effect mechanisms. It encourages a person to strive for both the worldly affairs and those of the hereafter. It is foolish for a person to say that if Allāh has decreed for his hunger to be removed, then there is no need for him to eat, just as it is foolish for a person to say that if Allāh has decreed Paradise for him, there is no need for him to act, since all things are through ways and means, causes and effects.

b) Peace, serenity and calmness for the heart and soul because a person knows that all things are by Allāh’s decree and that whatever afflicted him was never going to miss him and whatever missed him was never going to come to him. This helps to inculcate patience by which a person sees through hardships, difficulties and calamities and repels anxiety, stress and grief with ease.

c) Humility and not being amazed with oneself since all things attained by any person are favours bestowed by Allāh. A person only acquires things through the ways and means Allāh has created and subjected for his use and benefit. This leads him to be humble and grateful to Allāh and to abandon egotism and self-amazement.

This concludes our brief treatment of the six pillars of faith (īmān). A detailed belief in these matters [which cannot be directly seen but are known through strong indirect evidences] increases one’s faith. This leads us into the discussion of the relationship between Islām and Īmān and to the nature and reality of faith. This is one of the most crucial aspects to understand about Islām. Through it, the true nature of the connection between inward faith and righteous works is established.

The Reality of Faith

As has preceded, Islām is outward and Īmān (belief, faith) is inward.⁵² There is a connection between Islām and Īmān in that the outward Islām *represented by the five pillars* must have a minimal threshold of inward Īmān for it to be genuine and valid. Likewise, the inward Īmān *represented by the six pillars* must also have a minimal threshold of outward Islām in word and deed for it to be genuine and valid, and that is **the two testifications and the prayer**.

When the word Islām is used on its own, it refers to the whole religion, inward and outward. Similarly, when Īmān is used on its own, it refers to the whole religion, inward and outward. When they are used together, in the same sentence or context, Islām refers to what is outward and Īmān refers to what is inward.

From the most crucial of affairs that a Muslim must understand is the **binding, necessary, inseparable link** between the internal and the external, between Islām and Īmān, between what is in the heart and what takes place on the tongue and limbs. Anyone who denies this binding link denies what is most elementary, plainly evident and known through the simplest of experiences.

This can be illustrated through an analogy in which attention should be given to:

- a) the delivery of knowledge to the heart through the senses,
- b) the creation of feelings in the heart through that knowledge,
- c) the generation of external actions through those feelings.

⁵² Inward belief is not completely blind—as is commonly understood about “faith”—but rests upon empirical foundations. Belief in Allāh is based upon innate disposition as well as reflection upon the visible traces and effects of His acts of creation, which are readily observed and experienced by all people with their physical senses. Belief in His Books and Messengers is also empirical as they have been seen and heard and first-hand knowledge of them has been authentically transmitted through every generation. As for belief in the Angels, the Last Day, Paradise and Hellfire and matters not sensed or perceived in this world then that is based upon information conveyed through revelation and messengership which is established through empirical means as has preceded. Thus, faith is not entirely “blind” but does have empirical, evidential basis that justifies and warrants it.

As for the analogy:

☞ If we imagine a group of people attending a gathering in a hall within a building in which they enjoy food, drink, make exchanges, engage in trade and shower respect and praise upon each other. A person whom they know well—who is known from past experience to be honest, truthful and reliable and not known to lie or fool around—enters the hall and says, “A raging fire is about to engulf the entire building and you must vacate immediately to escape and be safe”. The man also gives instructions so that the people can save themselves from impending danger through a specific, safe and quick route out of the building.

This analogy will help us to understand the various categories of people in their response to the call of the Messengers. Within this scenario, we can take a person in that gathering of sound perception, clear, intelligent mind and physical ability and analyse what may take place in his heart and mind of belief and disbelief with respect to the warner who announces his message openly.

The following ought to take place with respect to such a person:

First: The acquisition of sound, authentic information from a known, truthful, trustworthy person not known to lie. It is acquired through hearing and sight and is delivered to the heart and mind. This person may reject the warner and assert he is a liar in which case the truth status of the news imparted by the warner is rejected and knowledge would not have settled in his heart and mind.

Second: The nature of this information acquired from a truthful warner is not neutral or non-beneficial such that it evokes nothing inside a person of feelings and emotions. It is unlike when a person is informed 2 + 2 is 4 or that 1 mile is 1.61 kilometres which is mundane, factual knowledge. So unless a person is deaf, the knowledge so acquired through a truthful channel will stir the heart with emotion and lead to its compliance (inqiyād). Hence, fear (of harm and death), hope (of safety, escape), concern, anxiety, stress, motivation and what is similar will be evoked once this person has mentally understood the words and made minimal reflection upon the

knowledge conveyed to him through these words by the honest, truthful warner. The only thing preventing this is if the person was physically deaf, or did not hear, did not understand, or held the warner to be a liar.

Third: Such knowledge, feelings and emotions have now been acquired by the heart which would cause it to enter a state of wilful, unhindered compliance (inqiyād) to that in which its safety and well-being lie. Sound knowledge accepted as true and factual creates those feelings and emotions and puts the heart in this state. Unless a person is disabled, lame, or tied in chains, it is a must that this persons stands, speaks and acts for his or her welfare and safety. It is not possible for this person to remain sitting unless he or she misunderstood or misheard the truthful informant or holds him to be a liar, or prefers the gathering and its delights over deliverance.

Hence, action is necessary, it is binding and vital. A person free of all impediments who is not deaf, disabled, restrained or limited in any way, will stand and act upon the knowledge acquired and upon the emotions necessarily evoked by that knowledge.

The only thing preventing action—if the message was heard and understood perfectly and there were no impediments or restraints—would be pride or arrogance, though it would be seriously out of place in such a situation. Here, a person hates to be commanded and prohibited by another and pride and arrogance prevents him from acting upon the sincere beneficial advice of the truthful warner. In this case, his pride overwhelms and drowns those other feelings which are necessarily produced and he refuses to act, much to his own detriment. He can hear, but is deaf. He can see, but is blind. He has a heart, but it is veiled by his own arrogance. He will suffer, inevitably, the consequences of his arrogance.

This analogy allows us to draw out the nature and reality of Īmān (faith: based upon justified, warranted trust in a truthful source) and kufr (disbelief), and this can be summarised in the following points:

1. **Speech and deed, inward and outward.** Faith comprises both speech and deed and resides in the heart, tongue and limbs. The

knowledge (belief) of the heart is its speech. Its feelings and emotions are its actions. The tongue's declaration of belief is its speech. The actions of the limbs include all outward righteous deeds, verbal or physical. As for:

- The claim that faith is only what resides in the heart exclusive to its verbal expression and deeds is false. It is a must that when truthful information comes to the people in the hall gathering that they make verbal expressions and perform actions.

- The claim that faith is verbal expression, exclusive of what is in the heart and performed by the limbs is false. This would turn hypocrites who inwardly disbelieve into true believers.

- The claim that faith comprises what is in the heart and verbal expression exclusive of actions is also false. Actions are a necessity. Truthful, beneficial knowledge must produce beneficial action. In our analogy of the building and fire, the people must act by necessity.

Thus, faith is what is in the heart, on the tongue and performed by the limbs. This is a matter of consensus amongst orthodox Muslim scholars and is based upon a correct understanding of the revealed texts of the Qur'ān and the Prophetic traditions.

Citing this consensus, the Muslim scholar, Abū Bakr al-Isīmā'īlī (d. 1059) said: "And they [the orthodox scholars of the Muslims] say: "Certainly, faith is speech (qawl), action ('amal) and belief (ma'rifah). It increases with obedience and decreases with disobedience. He whose obedience increases is more abundant in faith than the one who is less than him in obedience."⁵³ This nicely introduces our next point.

2. Increase and decrease. Faith is liable to increase and decrease. It increases with increase in beneficial knowledge and righteous deeds, whether those of the heart (such as sincerity, love, fear, hope, reliance, humility and so on) or those of the limbs (such as prayer, fasting, charity, truthfulness and so on). It decreases with sins and disobedience. A person's faith can increase until it becomes like mountains and it can also decrease until nothing remains of it save an atom's weight, or even nothing at all.

⁵³ *I'tiqād A'immat Ahl al-Ḥadīth*. Dār al-Fatḥ (1416H) p. 43.

3. **The binding link between the internal and external.** The actions of the heart are tied to the actions of the limbs, they are the impetus for outward deeds. The outward deeds in turn affect the heart. It is **two way traffic**, the road is in both directions. One affects the other by necessity. Whoever presumes that there can exist perfect faith in the heart without any external manifestation is greatly misguided and has opposed common sense, experience, reason and revelation. Whoever presumes that a person can violate every command and prohibition, without that decreasing—or in some cases negating—the faith in his heart is misguided. This implies that the greatest of sinners and criminals are equal in faith to the most pious.

4. **Levels of faith.** We now understand there are two levels of faith. That which relates to its **validity** (ṣiḥḥah), without which it does not exist, it is the minimal threshold of Islām and Īmān as has preceded. And that which relates to its **perfection** (kamāl). There are two levels of perfection: **obligatory** (wājib) and **recommended** (mustaḥabb). There are obligatory deeds whose neglect makes one sinful and liable to punishment. There are recommended deeds which perfect one's faith and increase one's rank and reward.⁵⁴

Hence, believers with genuine faith are of three types:

1. Those who wrong themselves by neglecting the obligations and falling into the prohibitions.
2. Those who take a middle course by performing the obligations and keeping away from the prohibitions.

⁵⁴ It is important to note that whilst deeds are part of and essential to the reality of faith and to salvation, none enters Paradise through deeds alone, but through the grace and mercy of Allāh (عَزَّوَجَلَّ). The Prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) said: "Be deliberate in worship, draw near to Allāh, and give glad tidings. Verily, none of you will enter Paradise because of his deeds alone." They said, "Not even you, O Messenger of Allāh?" The Prophet said: "Not even me, unless Allāh grants me mercy from himself." Related by al-Bukhārī and Muslim. In other words, a person enters Paradise through Allāh's bounty and mercy because Allāh created Him, guided him and gave him the ability and success in performing these deeds which are a cause (not the *only cause*) of salvation. Hence, the ultimate cause is Allāh's grace and mercy, and faith in which righteous works are essential, is a requirement.

3. Those who are foremost in doing good deeds, who keep the obligations, avoid the prohibitions and perform the voluntary, recommended deeds whilst avoiding deeds which are disliked, though not forbidden.

These three categories are mentioned in the following verse:

ثُمَّ أَوْرَثْنَا الْكِتَابَ الَّذِينَ اصْطَفَيْنَا مِنْ عِبَادِنَا فَمِنْهُمْ ظَالِمٌ لِنَفْسِهِ وَمِنْهُمْ مُقْتَصِدٌ
وَمِنْهُمْ سَابِقٌ بِالْخَيْرَاتِ إِذِنَ اللَّهُ ذَلِكَ هُوَ الْفَضْلُ الْكَبِيرُ

“Then we caused to inherit the Book those We have chosen of Our servants; and among them is he who wrongs himself, and among them is he who is moderate, and among them is he who is foremost in good deeds by permission of Allāh. That [inheritance of the Book] is indeed the great bounty.” (35:32).

If faith was just in the heart alone, then all believers, irrespective of their striving, efforts and deeds would be equal and rewarded equally. This is not in agreement with divine justice.

5. **Types of disbelief.** Completing our analogy of the man warning a gathering of people of a fire in the building, we can now discuss the different scenarios in which a person in that gathering may reject and disbelieve in the warner whose integrity and truthfulness was already known, established and undisputed prior to this event:

a) Anyone who considered the truthful warner to be a liar would be a disbeliever. Hence, beneficial knowledge has not settled into his heart and subsequently, the compliance (inqiyād) of the heart will not arise. This would be known as **takdhīb** (rejection).

b) Anyone who was doubtful or hesitant, not knowing whether the warner’s message is the truth or not, or whether to act upon it or not, is a disbeliever. It is disbelief of doubt, which is known as **shakk**.

c) Anyone inwardly convinced that the warner is truthful in what he says, but outwardly rejected the information he brought is also a disbeliever, but his disbelief is of a different category. He denies with knowledge. To illustrate, a man borrows money from another and when demanded to repay, he denies he ever borrowed the money. So this is denial after having full knowledge. This is known as **juḥūd**.

d) Anyone who refused to act due to pride and arrogance is also a disbeliever, despite his affirmation of the truthfulness of the warner

and the veracity of his information. Thus, not all disbelief relates to the absence of knowledge and belief in the heart alone. Rather, some disbelief is based on the action of the heart alone. This is disbelief of arrogance and proud refusal, known as *istikbār* and *ibā'*

e) Anyone who mocked the warner and his message and mocked those who respond to him is also a disbeliever. His disbelief is that of mockery, which is known as *istihzā'*. This is also an action of the heart and is not related to its knowledge and belief. Thus, he might accept the warner is truthful, honest and that his message is true and correct, but nevertheless, mocks the message, belittles it and those who accept and follow it. This is often coupled with and caused by other forms of disbelief such as arrogance and proud refusal.

f) Anyone who chose not to respond and act in order to remain preoccupied in the gathering and its frivolities is also a disbeliever. Giving preference to worldly pursuits is a barrier to responding to truthful, beneficial knowledge. This is the disbelief of turning away and not caring, which is known as *īrād*. A person turns away with his hearing, seeing, thinking and reflecting and takes no interest.

g) Anyone who hindered and prevented others from responding to the warner and his message of safety, or worse still, abused them and harmed them is greater in disbelief. This person may, at the same time, know full well that the warner is speaking the truth. Such a heart is filled with hatred, which is known as *kurh*.

h) Anyone who pretended to believe in the warner and displayed signs of acceptance and compliance in speech and action, whilst concealing disbelief and working against the interests of those who genuinely follow the warner's instructions. This is *nifāq*, hypocrisy. It is self-delusion and is the worst of all states and conditions.

The above analogy of the building, the fire and the warner is that of Allāh's Messengers who come to warn and the various responses they receive which divide people into believers and disbelievers, with disbelief being of various types and manifestations.

In summary: We have distinguished between *īmān* (faith, belief) and what opposes it of disbelief (*kufr*). We have also explained the nature and reality of faith, how it is a divisible whole, consisting of parts, subject to increase and decrease, being both internal and

external, existing in the heart, on the tongue and the limbs. Likewise, we have explained the various types of disbelief on account which a person may reject a truthful warner. It is of various types, each type distinguished by the particular motivation or reason behind it. All the people of the world without exception fall into the various categories alluded to in the above discussion.

Finally, the parable of faith which is based upon trust in a truthful source and additional supporting evidences, it is like that of a tree which has roots beneath the ground, invisible, just like the heart and what it contains. These roots take nourishment from the soil and water, just like the heart receives beneficial knowledge. In turn these roots nourish what is external, the trunks, branches, twigs and leaves. Similarly, genuine faith in the heart produces external fruits. A condition for the tree's survival and growth in its early life [and eventual bearing of fruits] is the absence of weeds and toxins. Similarly, the heart must be free of beliefs, statements and deeds that clash with faith, harm it and invalidate it. Thus, the parable:

أَلَمْ تَرَ كَيْفَ ضَرَبَ اللَّهُ مَثَلًا كَلِمَةً طَيِّبَةً كَشَجَرَةٍ طَيِّبَةٍ أَصْلُهَا ثَابِتٌ وَفَرْعُهَا فِي السَّمَاءِ. تُؤْتِي أُكْلَهَا كُلَّ حِينٍ بِإِذْنِ رَبِّهَا وَيَضْرِبُ اللَّهُ الْأَمْثَالَ لِلنَّاسِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَذَكَّرُونَ.
وَمَثَلُ كَلِمَةٍ خَبِيثَةٍ كَشَجَرَةٍ خَبِيثَةٍ اجْتُثِّلَتْ مِنْ فَوْقِ الْأَرْضِ مَا لَهَا مِنْ قَرَارٍ

"See you not how Allāh sets forth a parable of a goodly word as a goodly tree, whose root is firmly fixed, and its branches (reach very high) to the sky. Giving its fruit at all times, by the leave of its Lord and Allāh sets forth parables for mankind in order that they may remember. And the parable of an evil word is that of an evil tree uprooted from the surface of earth having no stability." (14:24-26).

The goodly word is the statement, "*Lā ilāha illallāh*", it is the tree of faith whose roots are firmly established in the heart of a believer. It produces the fruits of sincere, righteous actions which rise up to Allāh and are accepted by Him. And as for the parable of disbelief, the evil word is the statement of disbelief which has no foundation because it is not rooted in reality. It is unstable and easily uprooted as it is based upon speculation and nourished by pure conjectures and whims. This concludes our discussion of faith. Next, we look at the third level, that of excellence (*ihsān*).

The Pillar of Iḥsān (Excellence)

Islām has three levels.

The first, **Islām**, is entered into through the two testifications and attained through the performance of the most important outward obligations which are its pillars. It is outward and we take everyone who outwardly professes Islām at face value, though Allāh knows best what is in the hearts. Outward Islām allows the rulings and rights of other Muslims to take effect.

The second, **Īmān**, is a rank higher than that of Islām and refers to what is in the heart of genuine belief, sincerity, truthfulness, love, humility and so on which must manifest outwardly. Thus a believer increases in beneficial knowledge and righteous action in order to increase his faith, acquire goodness and work towards perfection of character. A believer (mu'min) is superior than a submitter (muslim), and Allāh knows best what each person is.

The third and highest level is that of **Iḥsān** (excellence) and only has one pillar, which is simple:

It is to worship Allāh as if you can see Him, but though you cannot see Him, He certainly sees you.

Such a person is known as a *muḥsin*, or one who excels in good. Such a one possesses the highest rank.

This entails that a person knows that Allāh sees Him no matter where he is or what deed he is engaged in and that he worships Allāh as if he sees Allāh, though he cannot see Allāh.

It is to say and do only that which pleases Allāh knowing that He hears and sees all things, hidden or open.

The fruits of Iḥsān are numerous and include:

a) Cultivation of piety and awareness of Allāh in both the hidden and the open, leading one to become a pious worshipper.

b) Ensuring sincerity to Allāh in one's worship.

c) Winning the nearness, aid and support of Allāh.

d) Succeeding with Paradise in the hereafter.

Allāh (عَزَّوَجَلَّ) said:

هَلْ جَزَاءُ الْإِحْسَانِ إِلَّا الْإِحْسَانُ

“Is the reward for good [anything] but good?” (55:60).

The Three Levels and Ranks

The three levels of Islām have been summarised in a well-known and famous Prophetic tradition. The Prophet's companion, 'Umar bin al-Khaṭṭāb (رضي الله عنه) related:

"Whilst we were sitting with the Messenger of Allāh (صلى الله عليه وسلم) one day, there came upon us a man whose clothes were intensely white and whose hair was intensely black. No sign of journey was visible on him and none of us knew him. He came and sat down by the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم), placing his knees by his (the Prophet's) knees and placed his hands on his thighs.

He said, 'O Muḥammad, inform me about Islām.' The Messenger of Allāh said, 'Islām is to bear witness that none has the right to be worshipped but Allāh and Muḥammad is the Messenger of Allāh, to establish the prayer, to pay the zakāh, to fast in Ramaḍān and to make pilgrimage to the House if you are able to do so.' He (the man) said, 'You have spoken truthfully,' and we were amazed at his asking him and confirming he spoke truthfully.

He said, 'Then inform me about Īmān.' He said, 'Īmān is to believe in Allāh, His Angels, His Books, His Messengers, the Last Day, and to believe in the Divine Decree.' He said, 'You have spoken truthfully.'

He said, "Then tell me about Iḥsān." He said, "It is to worship Allāh as if you can see Him, and even though you cannot see Him, He most certainly sees you."⁵⁵

Muslim scholars throughout the ages have given great attention to this Prophetic tradition and its explanation because it comprises the essence of Islām in a concise and comprehensive way. The contents of this book so far have been an elaboration of this tradition.

The three levels should be considered as three concentric circles. The outermost one is Islām. The middle one is Īmān. The innermost one is Iḥsān. Thereby, every Muḥsin (one who excels) is a Mu'min (believer) and Muslim (submitter) by default. And every Mu'min is a Muslim by default. But not every Muslim is a Mu'min and not every Mu'min is a Muḥsin.

⁵⁵ Related by Muslim in Kitāb al-Īmān.

Sins and Allāh's Mercy and Forgiveness

It is inevitable that a Muslim has shortcomings and will occasionally fall into sin. Humans have been created with an imperfect nature and are characterised by ignorance (jah) and oppression (ẓulm). There are certain impulses such as lusts and desires or certain feelings such as jealousy, envy, greed and so on which prompt a person to say or do that which displeases Allāh because it is harmful to a person or to those besides him, or violates their rights. Thus, it is inevitable that people will sin due to their weak nature. Out of His vast mercy, Allāh (عَزَّوَجَلَّ) has provided ample means through which sins are expiated, erased or forgiven. We shall summarise them here in brief and they are divided into ten categories:⁵⁶

1. Repentance. Allāh said:

وَهُوَ الَّذِي يَقْبَلُ التَّوْبَةَ عَنْ عِبَادِهِ وَيَعْفُو عَنِ السَّيِّئَاتِ وَيَعْلَمُ مَا تَفْعَلُونَ

“And He it is Who accepts repentance from His slaves, and forgives sins, and He knows what you do.” (42:25).

The one who repents from sin is like the one with no sin at all, and the Prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) said: “All of the Sons of Ādam err and the best of those who err are those who constantly repent.”⁵⁷

2. Seeking forgiveness. This is a supplication, a request from Allāh to overlook and pardon one's sin.

وَاسْتَغْفِرُوا رَبَّكُمْ ثُمَّ تُوبُوا إِلَيْهِ إِنَّ رَبِّي رَحِيمٌ وَدُودٌ

“And ask forgiveness of your Lord and turn unto Him in repentance. Verily, my Lord is Most Merciful, Most Loving.” (11:90).

Seeking forgiveness is tied with repentance and accompanies it.

3. Righteous actions. As stated in the Qur'ān:

إِنَّ الْحَسَنَاتِ يُذْهِبْنَ السَّيِّئَاتِ

“Verily, the good deeds take away the bad deeds” (11:114)

⁵⁶ Refer to Ibn Taymiyyah, *Majmū' al-Fatāwā*, 7/487 onwards.

⁵⁷ *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Jāmi' al-Saghīr* (no. 4515) and it is ḥasan.

The Prophet (ﷺ) ordered his companions to follow up bad deeds with good deeds. The regular performance of the obligations, such as prayer, fasting and charity extinguishes sin.

These first three categories relate to a person's own deeds. However, Allāh's mercy is greater than that the removal of sins should be tied to a person's own actions alone. Thus:

4. Supplication of others. The supplications of believers for each other is from the causes of forgiveness, such as what is done in the funeral prayer wherein Muslims pray and ask for forgiveness for the deceased. Likewise, whatever supplications they make for each other whether voluntarily or upon request, these supplications aid in the removal of sin from the believers.

5. Intercession. The various intercessions by the prophets, angels and righteous that will take place on the Day of Judgement also remove sin. People will be delivered from punishment by way of these intercessions. However, this intercession is only for the people of Tawḥīd, those who gave worship exclusively to Allāh alone.

6. Righteous deeds by others. Charity, fasting and pilgrimage are righteous deeds that others can do for and on behalf of the deceased and can lead to mercy and forgiveness being granted to him.

The above three categories relate to the the deeds of others and are a manifestation of Allāh's mercy upon His servants, He makes it easy for them to acquire forgiveness through many routes. However, Allāh's mercy is greater than that the removal of sins should be tied to the actions of people alone. He also expiates their sins through the trials and tribulations they encounter during their lives.

7. Worldly afflictions. A person's sins are expiated through afflictions such as pain, illness, hardship, grief, anxiety and so on, until even the prick of a thorn or a moment of grief expiates sins.

8. The affliction of the grave. What takes place in the grave after death also expiates sins. The grave is an intermediate stage between

the world and the hereafter and has trials and tribulations which cleanse and purify a believer of his sins.

9. The trials of the Day of Judgement. The various hardships and terrors befalling on that day also expiate and remove sins.

These last three relate to the various calamities a person faces in the three abodes: *the world, the grave and the hereafter*. However, Allāh's mercy is greater than that it should be tied only to the ways and means which He placed, whether legislative or creative. Thus:

10. Allāh's mercy. There is still left, the pure mercy of Allāh—not tied to any causes or means—through which He forgives whomever He wills. A person may still come with sins like mountains after all of the above, yet Allāh may choose to forgive him. The only condition is that he meets Allāh whilst not associating any partners with Him in worship. This shows the greatness of the affair of Tawḥīd. However, alongside this, one does not forget or belittle the affair of sin.

We have discussed sins which a Muslim must not take lightly, even if the ways and means for their forgiveness are many and even if they do not expel a person from Islām. While it is true that Allāh is most-Merciful, vast and overflowing in His mercy, it is not permissible for a Muslim to simply hope in Allāh's mercy alone and indulge in sins without care or concern, without fearing His punishment. **Hence, he or she must combine between hoping in Allāh's mercy and fearing His punishment.** They are like the two wings of a bird, without one or the other, the bird will not be able to fly. In a like manner, a worshipper cannot travel to his Lord through hope *alone* as this leads to unfounded optimism, or through fear *alone* as this leads to unfounded despair, but must combine them together in order to remain stable and in motion, both inwardly and outwardly.

What is greater than the affair of sin, is the affair of what invalidates and nullifies a person's Islām altogether, and this grave and serious matter will be discussed next. It is vital for a Muslim to thoroughly grasp this subject.

The Nullifiers of Islām

The next extremely important matter to grasp then is that Islām has **boundaries and outer limits** which are clearly defined in the Qur'ān and Prophetic traditions. A Muslim can leave Islām through certain beliefs, statements and deeds that exceed the boundaries, clash with the foundations of Islām and can never be reconciled with it.

Here we present a list of affairs that are agreed upon by Muslim scholars from the well-known orthodox schools of jurisprudence and are not in dispute. To protect and preserve one's Islām, a Muslim must learn these affairs, avoid them and be extremely cautious with respect to them.

These affairs are:

1. Associating partners with Allāh. Worshipping others alongside Allāh, praying to them, sacrificing to them, seeking rescue from them, asking them for things only Allāh has power and control over, all of this directly contradicts Islām and violates Tawḥīd.

It is not possible for a person to say, "*None has the right to be worshipped but Allāh alone*" and then worship others besides Him. His statement is of no effect. It is no different to a person claiming to be a vegetarian and being committed to vegetarianism but who regularly eats beef burgers. This is impossible by definition. Hence, the claim that one can profess Islām and then say and do *whatever* one likes is false and is only said by the ignoramus or the one desiring to negate Islām from its very foundations. To associate partners in worship with Allāh is corruption and revilement of reason and is a sin that is unforgivable should a person die upon it.

Allāh (عَزَّوَجَلَّ) said:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَغْفِرُ أَنْ يُشْرَكَ بِهِ وَيَغْفِرُ مَا دُونَ ذَلِكَ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ

"Verily, Allāh forgives not that partners should be set up with him in worship, but He forgives besides that [anything else] to whom He pleases." (4:48).

2. Setting up intermediaries. Setting up intermediaries in order to take them as intercessors such that one asks from Allāh through

them, invokes them, places one's reliance upon them and uses them as a means of nearness to Allāh and as a means of repelling harms, acquiring benefits and acquiring that which only Allāh has power over, such as the forgiveness of sins, entry into Paradise, removal of sickness and the likes. All of this invalidates Islām.

Allāh (عَزَّوَجَلَّ) said:

وَتَعْبُدُونَ مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ مَا لَا يَضُرُّهُمْ وَلَا يَنْفَعُهُمْ وَيَقُولُونَ هَؤُلَاءِ شَفَعَاؤُنَا عِنْدَ اللَّهِ قُلْ أَتُنَبِّئُونَ اللَّهَ بِمَا لَا يَعْلَمُ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَلَا فِي الْأَرْضِ سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى عَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ

“And they worship besides Allāh that which neither harms them nor benefits them, and they say, ‘These are our intercessors with Allāh.’ Say, ‘Do you inform Allāh of something He does not know in the Heavens or on the Earth?’ Exalted is He and high above what they associate with Him.” (10:18).

The route to Allāh is direct and unhindered, without barriers and gateways. One can ask directly from Allāh rather than through a multitude of intercessors.⁵⁸ The Christians worship saints, take them as intermediaries and intercessors and invoke them for needs which can only be fulfilled by Allāh. Unfortunately, many Muslims have followed in their footsteps and have taken the inhabitants of graves as objects of reverence and worship, invoking them alongside Allāh. This matter has even become widespread in many of the Muslim lands, which helps to explain their weakness, subjugation and humiliation among the nations.

3. Validating false religion. Considering the way of those who worship stones, trees, idols, humans, angels, jinn, the elements and so on, to comprise legitimate religion and alternative, acceptable ways to Allāh is also a nullifier of Islām. This is a belief that invalidates the truth of the statement, “None has the right to be worshipped but Allāh

⁵⁸ As for asking a living person to supplicate to Allāh for you, it is from the permitted ways and means. Likewise, asking a living, present, hearing, able person to do something for you for which he has the power and ability in the worldly affairs, this is also permissible.

alone". Rather, a Muslim must free himself from false religion and hold it to be incorrect and futile. Allāh (عَزَّوَجَلَّ) said:

وَمَنْ يَبْتَغِ غَيْرَ الْإِسْلَامِ دِينًا فَلَنْ يُقْبَلَ مِنْهُ وَهُوَ فِي الْآخِرَةِ مِنَ الْخَاسِرِينَ

"And whoever seeks a religion other than Islām, it will never be accepted of him, and in the Hereafter he will be of the losers." (3:85).

This does not prevent a Muslim from having just behaviour and conduct with non-Muslims. A Muslim does not compromise with the truth, nor does he engage in injustice towards others. Rather, he is obligated to be just towards them and is permitted to be benevolent and kind to those who do not fight, wrong or harm him.

4. Believing another guidance is better. To believe that there is a guidance more truthful, more beneficial, and more excellent than the guidance taught by the Prophets and Messengers, at the head of them and the very last of them, Muḥammad (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ). The best guidance is that of Muḥammad (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ), it is a culmination and perfection of the guidance of Noah, Abraham, Moses and Jesus (عَلَيْهِمُ السَّلَامُ). It guides to the truth and that which is upright in morals and conduct. Its rulings protect and preserve the necessities of life, property, reason, lineage and honour in a manner unrivalled by any other legislation.

Allāh (عَزَّوَجَلَّ) said:

اللَّهُ نَزَّلَ أَحْسَنَ الْحَدِيثِ كِتَابًا مُتَشَابِهًا مَثَابًا تَقْسَعِرُ مِنْهُ جُلُودُ الَّذِينَ يَخْشَوْنَ رَبَّهُمْ ثُمَّ تَلِينُ جُلُودُهُمْ وَقُلُوبُهُمْ إِلَىٰ ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ ذَٰلِكَ هُدَىٰ اللَّهِ يَهْدِي بِهِ مَن يَشَاءُ وَمَن يُضَلِلِ اللَّهُ فَمَا لَهُ مِن هَادٍ

"Allāh has sent down the best statement, a Book (this Qur'ān), its parts resembling each other in goodness and oft-repeated truth. The skins of those who fear their Lord shiver from it [when they recite it or hear it]. Then their skins and hearts soften to the remembrance of Allāh. That is the guidance of Allāh. He guides therewith whom He pleases and whomever Allah sends astray, for him there is no guide." (39:23).

5. Hating anything the Messenger came with. Hating the truth brought by the Messengers, and at the head of them Muḥammad

(صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ), or hating any aspect or element of it invalidates Islām. For example, to hate and dislike the prayer, or zakāt (obligatory charity), or the commands in Islām which relate to maintaining modesty and chastity, or any of its legislations, invalidates Islām. Hatred in the heart cannot be reconciled with the acceptance (qabūl) and compliance (inqiyād) of the heart. Hence, a Muslim must submit and accept all of the truth. There may be things which a person may not understand, whose wisdom may not be clear and which may be contrary to habit, custom, or one's limited reason. However, a person should not harbour hatred and dislike, rather he or she must gain more knowledge and acquire clarification and understanding if able, and if not, then to submit, acknowledge one's own limitations and keep the heart safe and sound. Allāh (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ) said:

ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ كَرِهُوا مَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ فَأَخْبَطَ أَعْمَالَهُمْ

"That is because they hate that which Allāh has sent down (of this Qur'ān and its rules and injunctions), so He has made their deeds to be fruitless." (47:9)

6. Mocking or belittling Islām or anything from it. Mocking and belittling Islām or anything from its laws, or mocking the Prophet (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) and belittling him is an automatic nullifier of Islām. Such mockery and belittlement which emanates from the heart cannot be reconciled with the respect, veneration, love and compliance that emanates through the knowledge that it is truth from the Lord of the worlds. Since Muslims believe in the existence of absolute truth and falsehood, guidance and misguidance, then there are sanctities that cannot be violated and boundaries which cannot be overstepped. This is unlike secular, liberal, atheist philosophies in which there is no intrinsic, inherent purpose to life [and thus no absolute truth] and everyone must invent and pursue his own meaning and purpose in life whilst being allowed to make fun of everyone else's, because, ultimately, there are no sanctities. However, Muslims do not believe that the Heavens, the Earth and life therein is in vain. Rather, there is an absolute truth and there will be absolute justice. Hence, there are sanctities which cannot be violated, otherwise truth is undermined and eroded. Thus, any Muslim who mocked Islam, or anything from

it, or who mocked the Messenger (ﷺ) has invalidated his Islām, because through this mockery or belittlement a person has emptied his heart of love, compliance, veneration and respect.

Allāh (ﷻ) said regarding a group of hypocrites who made fun of the Prophet and his companions on account of religion:

وَلَيْن سَأَلْتَهُمْ لَيَقُولُنَّ إِنَّمَا كُنَّا نَخُوضُ وَنَلْعَبُ قُلْ أَبِاللَّهِ وَآيَاتِهِ وَرَسُولِهِ كُنْتُمْ

تَسْتَهْزِئُونَ. لَا تَعْتَذِرُوا قَدْ كَفَرْتُمْ بَعْدَ إِيمَانِكُمْ

“If you ask them, they declare: ‘We were only talking idly and joking.’ Say: ‘Was it at Allāh, and His signs and His Messenger that you were mocking?’ Make no excuse; you have disbelieved after your belief.” (9:65-66).

The Muslim scholar Shaykh al-Sa’dī (d. 1956) said: “Making fun of Allāh and His Messenger is disbelief which expels from the religion. This is because the foundation of religion is built upon venerating Allāh, His religion and His messengers. Mocking anything from that negates this foundation and invalidates it in the most severe way.”⁵⁹

Thus mocking the beard for men, or mocking the women's hijāb, or mocking the prayer or the pilgrimage or anything known from Islām through authentic texts is disbelief.

7. Practising magic. Magic is a mutually beneficial relationship between men and devils (jinn)⁶⁰ in which magicians obey the demands of the devils and the devils fulfil the requests of magicians. The magic being referred to is that in which the assistance of the devils is sought in order to effect some benefit or harm in others, and not the tricks and illusions performed by mere sleight of hand,

⁵⁹ *Taysīr al-Karīm al-Rahmān Fī Tafsīr Kalām al-Mannān*. Beirut: Risālah Publishers (1423H), pp. 342-343.

⁶⁰ The jinn are created beings and, like angels, cannot be seen by men in their original form. They were created before men from the smokeless flame-material of fire and are obligated to respond to the Prophets. They are also punished and rewarded. In general, the jinn live in remote areas, away from the habitations of men. Jinn can affect, influence and possess men and this is known empirically and through experience. Different societies and civilisations have invented mythologies, names, labels and titles to explain a variety of phenomena that actually arise due to the jinn.

advanced knowledge of mechanisms and use of devices with no involvement from the devils. The devils do not assist magicians until and unless they commit disbelief through speech or deed. As such, disbelief is an automatic presumption in all devil-assisted magic. Anyone engaging in this magic has invalidated his Islām, even if he professes Islām outwardly and appears as a pious worshipper.

Allāh (عَزَّوَجَلَّ) said about those who purchase magic, denying that they have any share in the hereafter, proving their disbelief:

وَيَتَعَلَّمُونَ مَا يَضُرُّهُمْ وَلَا يَنْفَعُهُمْ وَلَقَدْ عَلِمُوا لَمَنِ اشْتَرَاهُ مَا لَهُ فِي الْآخِرَةِ مِنْ خَلَاقٍ
وَلَيْبَسَنَّ مَا سُورُوا بِهِ أَنْفُسُهُمْ لَوْ كَانُوا يَعْلَمُونَ

“But they certainly knew that whoever purchased magic would not have in the Hereafter any share. And wretched is that for which they sold themselves, if they only knew.” (2:102).

Magicians profit from the events, circumstances or misfortunes in the lives of others in which there are interplays of greed, lust, jealousy and the seeking of revenge, fame, authority and power. These are the evils and poisons of the heart. The magicians exploit these base desires in people by offering assistance to them in achieving their goals. This assistance is provided through the devils. To win it, the magicians willingly engage in statements or deeds of disbelief or polytheism. Examples include mocking Allāh, writing on the Qur’ān with menstrual blood, throwing the Qur’ān into filth, sacrificing a chicken or lamb to the devils, worshipping idols and other such evil, repugnant actions. The magicians embezzle wealth from people by offering them help in their personal lives and in the predicaments they find themselves in. In reality they are corrupters of society and engage in the vilest of professions, selling themselves for a paltry, miserable price, and only cause harm, not rectification.

It is a rule that whenever tawhīd (monotheism) and īmān (faith) are rooted within a society, the magicians hide and go underground. And whenever polytheism, disbelief and ignorance are widespread, the magicians surface and become widespread.⁶¹

⁶¹ In a like manner, whenever Islām and its injunctions are rooted within a society, the nation-destroyers such as usury, alcohol, gambling and fornication or adultery are absent or minimised. These affairs destroy life,

8. Aiding polytheists against Muslims. Aiding polytheists and disbelievers against Muslims due to having love for the religion of the polytheists and out of the desire to see it dominate over the religion of the Muslims is an obvious nullifier of Islām. It is not possible for there to be inward faith in the presence of such an action.

The Muslim scholars have discussed and clarified the matter of loyalty and allegiance in a detailed manner and we provide a concise summary here:

a) A Muslim may love, respect and honour his or her non-Muslim Jewish or Christian spouse, non-Muslim parents of any background, non-Muslim sons and daughters or non-Muslim relatives. He or she may respect and show kindness to non-Muslim neighbours. A Muslim does not love, honour and respect these categories of people out of love for their religion but because of specific worldly relationships in which love or respect is natural. Honouring them or showing kindness to them is enjoined in Islām.

b) A Muslim might show love and loyalty to a non-Muslim (outside of the first category above), because of some worldly benefit he seeks to gain *at the expense of neglecting some aspects or elements of his religion*. This is considered a sin and prohibited because it is an impermissible compromise. A Muslim must be more honourable than to try and acquire worldly benefits in such a manner.

c) A Muslim might show love, loyalty, allegiance and give aid to the polytheists and disbelievers due to their religion. In other words, he loves them for their religion and aids them against the Muslims. He wants them to dominate the Muslims and for their religion to be strengthened against that of the Muslims. This nullifies Islām without any doubt and clashes with faith from every angle. As for when he aids and supports them for a worldly reason, not out of love for their religion, then this is a very serious major sin.

These are very important distinctions which must be understood especially in these times in which we have a) *extremists and terrorists* who are engaged in a war against Islām and Muslims before anyone

lineage, intellect and property which Islām came to protect vigorously. And whenever a society is far from Islām, these destroyers take root.

else⁶² and b) *liberals* following their desires who wish to rewrite and undermine Islām from its very foundations and destroy the distinct, honourable identity of true, upright Muslims whose chief principle in interacting with others is justice ('adl).⁶³

9. Believing one is exempt from following the Prophet (ﷺ).

The claim that there are people who are exempt from following the guidance of the Prophet (ﷺ) is disbelief and invalidates a person's Islām. This belief is found among some extreme sects such as those among the *Šūfīs*⁶⁴ who claim that there are certain people who receive illumination from Allāh directly and no longer need to follow the Prophet and his guidance because it is only for the common people and not for the elite like them. They claim that their saints or elites can bypass the Prophets and Messengers and receive sudden illumination (*kashf*) and guidance directly from Allāh. This is plain disbelief and a clear invalidation of the statement: "Muḥammad (ﷺ) is the Messenger of Allāh."

⁶² Due to their severe ignorance and complete lack of understanding of basic principles of Islāmic law, the extremists and terrorists accuse rulers, governments of Muslim countries and their institutions such as the military and police of apostasy because of permissible diplomatic and trade relations with non-Muslim nations.

⁶³ Many so-called liberals claiming to "reform" Islām manifest the signs and characteristics of hypocrites and their claim to Islām is questionable.

⁶⁴ *Šūfism* is an innovated tradition influenced by Gnosticism, Greek philosophy (neo-Platonism) and aspects of Buddhism. It is alluring and appealing to those who are not well-informed because of its apparent association with spirituality and purification of the soul. However, there are doctrines one is lead to through this deceptive door which clash with Islām and constitute a form of disbelief greater than that of the Christians who said God indwells within Jesus. Such doctrines include that of the unity of existence (*wahdat al-wujūd*) in which it is claimed that there is no existence save that of God, there is no such thing as "creator" or "created" and that everything is a physical manifestation of the divine essence. These doctrines appeared amongst the Muslims after mixing with the nations and being influenced by foreign ideological poisons.

The best guidance is the guidance of Muḥammad (ﷺ) and what he legislated and commanded of affairs pertaining to the purification of the soul is sufficient for the attainment of inward and outward perfection.

From the devices used by these people to misguide others is that they divide the religion into what they call the **apparent** (ẓāhir) or the **external law** (sharī'ah) on the one hand, which they claim is for the shallow, unsophisticated commoners. And on the other hand, the **hidden** (bāṭin) or the **inner reality** (ḥaqīqah) which refers to secret doctrines and interpretations and is only for the philosophical elite who are able to grasp higher truths, unlike those inferior to them. By mystifying religion in this way and claiming their leaders possess secret knowledge, they lay down foundations for the development of cults and cult ideologies. There is no path to Allāh except through the Prophet (ﷺ) whose guidance is a completion and perfection of the guidance of all the Prophets and Messengers sent by Allāh. There is no *hidden knowledge*, *secret organisation* or *elitism* in Islām. Rather, these matters are the foundation of misguidance.

10. Turning away from Islām. To turn away *entirely* from Islām after professing it and not having any desire at all to learn or act upon it, to turn one's back on obedience to Allāh and His Messenger, to choose to remain ignorant of the foundations by which one's Islām and Īmān are kept intact despite having the means and ability to learn them, all of this nullifies Islām. It is impossible for a person to believe in his heart and express with his tongue yet not perform a single outward obligation in his life, ever. It is impossible for a person who has professed Islām to have no desire at all to learn that by which he fulfils his most basic obligations. Whoever turns away completely with his hearing, seeing, heart and body from Islām in this manner cannot remain a Muslim, indicating the great danger of having no desire at all for knowledge and action.

To conclude this chapter, a Muslim must take caution with respect to this serious topic. He or she must study the nature and reality of faith (īmān) and the various beliefs, statements and actions that diminish it or nullify it altogether.⁶⁵

⁶⁵ The noble scholar, Shaykh Muḥammad bin 'Abd al-Wahhāb (d. 1792)—countered and curtailed extremism in this field by restricting the nullifiers of Islām to only those that were agreed upon, which are ten in number.

Perfection of Morals and Character

The two testifications of Islām comprise the essential message of all previous prophets and messengers. The declaration which enters a person into Islām, has a **meaning** (ma'nā), **requirements** (muqtaḍā), **conditions** (shurūṭ) and **nullifiers** (nawāqīḍ).

After a person enters Islām, he establishes the remaining pillars and seeks knowledge to increase inward **Īmān** (faith). Thereafter, he strives for **Iḥsān** (excellence). All the while, he remains fearful and cautious lest his faith diminish due to sins or even disappear due to various nullifiers. To attain excellence and perfection, he or she must aim to emulate the Prophet (ﷺ) in his qualities and traits of perfection, from them:

- **Pure monotheism in belief, speech and deed**
- Kindness, benevolence - Sincerity - Rectifying affairs
- Reflecting - Spreading abundant salutations of peace
- Eating from the wholesome and pure - Spending upon others
- Trustworthiness, fulfilling one's trusts - Justice in dealings
- Being penitent - Insightfulness and perspicacity - Humility
- Righteousness - Benevolence - Kindness to one's parents
- Having a good countenance, being cheerful
- Weeping out of humility and piety - Repentance
- Cooperating upon righteousness - *Honouring the mother*
- Venerating that which is sacred and inviolable
- Piety - Recitation of the Qur'ān - Pondering deeply
- Reliance - Generosity - Good manners
- Adopting legislated ways and means to pursue livelihood
- Reflective silence - Forbearance - Serenity
- Excellent behaviour and dealings with one's family
- Modesty, shyness - Guarding chastity - *Honouring the mother*
- Invocation, supplication - Frequent remembrance of Allāh
- Showing mercy to others - Gentleness - Gratitude - Patience
- Charity - Abstinence from what is non-beneficial
- Truthfulness - Abundant prayer - *Honouring the mother*
- Maintaining family ties - Being organised
- Guarding one's tongue from what is indecent, immoral
- Fasting - Maintaining bodily cleanliness and purity

- Firm determination and resolve
 - Proceeding upon knowledge - Having certainty
 - Lofty intentions and objectives - Being charitable
 - Being diligent - Visiting the sick - Remembrance of death
 - Astuteness - Comprehension - Bravery
 - Nobility - Looking after the widow and the orphan
 - Struggling against one's soul in obedience to Allāh
 - Accounting one's soul - Giving sincere advice
- and many other traits all of which are manifest in the person and character of Muḥammad (ﷺ), as stated in the Qur'ān:

وَإِنَّكَ لَعَلَىٰ خُلُقٍ عَظِيمٍ

“And certainly, you [O Muḥammad] are upon an exalted standard of character.” (68:4).

From the many statements of the Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ) strongly emphasising the position of lofty manners and nobility in Islām:

“I was not sent [as a Messenger] but to perfect the righteous, beneficial traits (qualities, manners, behaviours).”⁶⁶ “[The whole of] righteousness is [but] noble manners.”⁶⁷ “There is nothing placed on the scales [of righteous deeds] weightier than good manners.”⁶⁸ “The most perfect of believers in faith are the best of them in manners, and the best of you are those best in their manners to their wives.”⁶⁹ “Indeed, the best of you are those who are best in manners.”⁷⁰ Explaining that which enters people into Paradise most: “Reverential fear (taqwā) of Allāh and good manners.”⁷¹ “I will be an advocate for a house in the highest part in Paradise for the one who exemplifies the best of manners.”⁷²

This is only a small selection out of a large number of narrations that establish the utmost importance of perfection of morals and character in Islām, which ought to be the goal of every Muslim.

⁶⁶ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Jāmi' al-Ṣaghīr (no. 2349).

⁶⁷ Related by Muslim (no. 4633).

⁶⁸ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Targhīb wal-Tarhīb (no. 2641).

⁶⁹ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Jāmi' al-Ṣaghīr (no. 1232).

⁷⁰ Related by al-Bukhārī (no. 5569).

⁷¹ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Targhīb wal-Tarhīb (no. 2642).

⁷² Ṣaḥīḥ al-Targhīb wal-Tarhīb (no. 2648).

Preservation of Islām, Īmān and Iḥsān

We have now completed our presentation of Islām through its **three levels**. We have explained the clear and **definitive boundaries** that separate Islām and Īmān from whatever clashes with and invalidates them. Also mentioned was the great importance of working towards **perfection and nobility in character** based upon a firm and stable foundation which is:

- belief in Allāh and His unique oneness,
- then **loving** Him for His innumerable favours and bounties,
- and upon that, **worshipping Him alone**,
- while **fearing** His displeasure and punishment,
- and **hoping** for His pleasure and reward.

All human behaviour is motivated and driven by *love, hope and fear*. No wilfully chosen action from any person ever falls outside of these three. These three emotions can be rooted in falsehood and incoherent, irrational beliefs or they can be rooted in truth and a coherent, rational, warranted belief. A firm, lasting, ethical and moral order that returns tangible benefits in the interests of both the individual and the society can only be based upon firm foundations that are rooted in truth and justice.⁷³

Islām cultivates excellent morals, lofty manners and righteous conduct so that all those beneficial interests whose attainment makes

⁷³ It is for this reason that Muslim societies adhering to Islām are more resilient to subversion and not easily exploited through usury, alcohol, gambling, drugs, fornication and adultery by which private interests benefit financially through the manipulation of base human desires. This is because Muslims have a law founded upon pure monotheism which protects all beneficial interests—both spiritual and material—of the individual and society. Thus, such nation-destroying evils are not allowed to take root. In contrast Christian societies followed Pauline Christianity which abolished the law and righteous works and restricted faith to beliefs in triads and trinities, personal saviours and other pagan-originating concepts that clash with the genuine teachings of Jesus: believing in one Lord, worshipping Him alone, and observing the law by combining inward faith with outward deeds. For that reason, Christian nations and societies are not resilient to erosion through subversive lifestyle philosophies.

societies thrive and prosper can be more easily extracted from the *goldmine* of human capital. **Humans are potential goldmines** and nobility and excellence can be cultivated and extracted out of them, but only with guidance that combines between beneficial knowledge and righteous action. The Prophet (ﷺ) said: “*People are like precious metals like those of gold and silver. The best of them in pre-Islāmic ignorance are the best of them in Islām when they acquire understanding.*”⁷⁴ Islām provides that guidance and its route is the revealed books and sent messengers, the last of which are the Qur’ān and the Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ) respectively.

Having said this, there are threats to the beneficial interests of the individual and the society. These threats operate at the individual level, affecting a person’s inward and outward faith, and in turn, affect the well-being of the society at the wider level.

The best way to illustrate them is through a parable which can serve as a conceptual framework for practical action based upon the sum of what has preceded.

☞ A Parable for One’s Faith (Īmān)

Imagine you are holding a **tank of water** with both of your hands as you traverse on a journey in which the collection and preservation of water determines your survival. **Five dangers** to the amount and purity of the water exist from the **environment** and the **people** surrounding you, and they are placed in a specific order:

- a) *Spilling* of some of the water in small or large amounts.
- b) A change in the water’s *colour* through impurities.
- c) A change in the water’s *odour* through impurities.
- d) A change in the waters’ *taste* through impurities.
- e) Tripping or falling and *complete loss* of the water.

The water is your **Īmān**. The vessel is your **heart**. Your aim is to gather **pure water** through rain, fresh streams and the likes so that your tank becomes full. You drink the clean water and it keeps you alive, breathing, speaking and acting. Similarly, **Īmān** (faith)—*acquired through authentic revealed knowledge*—keeps your heart alive, knowing, remembering, worshipping, acting and so on.

⁷⁴ Reported by Muslim (no. 2638).

However, you must avoid the five dangers which harm, poison, spoil, spill or empty the water altogether from your tank. When you slip (sin), you lose some of the water through spillage. Things can be slipped into your tank with or without your knowledge and spoil the water in its colour (making it unpleasant to look at), odour (make it unpleasant to smell) and taste (make it repugnant to drink). The same can happen to Īmān in your heart through doubts, innovations, misconceptions, heresies, lusts and desires. It can be spoiled and corrupted. There are also the hateful and spiteful who want you to lose your water altogether. They try to deceive you into pouring it out. Or they put obstacles in your way to make you fall and lose it all. If unable, they poison it. These are the people who want you to lose your Īmān completely or to wilfully abandon it altogether. They are driven by material or ideological interests.

Your aim is to keep filling your tank till it becomes full and to remain cautious and in perfect balance to avoid spillage, spoilage and sackage. Let us explain each of these three dangers.

☞ Spillage.

Faith (Īmān) is like a substance which is fluid and divisible, hence the parable with water. You spill water every time you slip. When you sin, some faith is lost through spillage, just like water is lost every time you slip. A sin is disobedience of Allāh's command.

Out of His perfect knowledge and wisdom, Allāh only commands what is beneficial for both the individual and the society and only prohibits what is harmful for them.

Allāh has rights over your body and wealth; your body has rights over you; and Allāh's servants have rights over each other. When you sin, you are violating the right of Allāh to be obeyed and you are violating the right of your soul and body to be kept in compliance with Allāh's command. If your sin entails harm to others in their property, person or honour, you have added violation of the rights of Allāh's servants to the first two violations.

Through these violations, the individual and society is harmed, leading to corruption. Allāh (ﷻ) said:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُ بِالْعَدْلِ وَالْإِحْسَانِ وَإِيتَاءِ ذِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَيَنْهَىٰ عَنِ الْفَحْشَاءِ وَالْمُنْكَرِ
وَالْبَغْيِ يَعِظُكُم لَعَلَّكُمْ تَذَكَّرُونَ

“Indeed, Allāh orders justice and good conduct and giving to relatives and forbids immorality and bad conduct and oppression. He admonishes you that perhaps you will be reminded.” (16:90).

The Muslim scholar, Shaykh ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Sa’dī (d. 1956) said of this verse: “This verse has comprehensively incorporated all the commands and prohibitions, nothing remains except that it enters into this [verse]. It is a principle to which all the details [of law] return. Every affair comprising justice, good conduct and generosity is from that which Allāh has commanded. Every affair comprising indecency, evil conduct and injustice is from that which Allāh has prohibited.”⁷⁵ All sins are *indecency*, *harmful conduct* or *injustice* and they are the source of corruption and harm upon the Earth. This is why they are prohibited and for that reason, Abū al-‘Āliyah (d. 710) said: “Whoever disobeyed Allāh caused corruption on Earth because rectification of the Earth and Heaven is through obedience.”⁷⁶

Sins can be major and minor. Major sins lead to great spillage and minor sins lead to less spillage, though they can add up and become equivalent to the harmful effect of major sins if one belittles them.

A major sin is defined as:

- that for which a prescribed punishment (ḥadd) is specified,
- that whose doer earns Allāh’s anger in the texts,
- that whose doer is cursed in the texts,
- that whose doer is threatened with Hellfire in the texts.

From another angle, major sins are those which impact the five necessities which Islāmic law protects and preserves. They are:

- a) sound religion,
- b) life,
- c) wealth,
- d) intellect and
- e) lineage or honour.

⁷⁵ *Taysīr al-Karīm al-Raḥmān* (Beirut: Mu’assasah al-Risālah, 2002) p. 447.

⁷⁶ Refer to *Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr* in his commentary on (30:41).

Everything which qualifies as a major sin negatively impacts these affairs. For example, alcohol consumption is a major sin. It leads to:

- harm to one's wealth through wastage,
- harm to one's health,
- harm to life through accidents or murder under its influence,
- harm to society through violence,
- harm to the economy,
- harm to one's religion and more.

Thus, whatever Allāh has forbidden is for the welfare and benefit of the individual and the society and whoever engages in that which Allāh has forbidden is bringing about corruption in society.

Minor sins are all other sins besides the major ones.

From the mercy of Allāh is that as long as one avoids the major sins, the minor sins will be erased:

إِن تَجْتَنِبُوا كَبَائِرَ مَا تُنْهَوْنَ عَنْهُ نُكَفِّرْ عَنْكُمْ سَيِّئَاتِكُمْ وَنُدْخِلْكُمْ مُدْخَلًا كَرِيمًا

“If you avoid the major sins which you are forbidden, We will remove from you your lesser sins and admit you to a noble entrance [into Paradise].”(4:31).

Thus, a Muslim must not to treat sin lightly because its evil effects return back to himself and to the society. Cause-effect mechanisms exist in the realm of human actions just as they exist in the realm of nature. They are explained in revealed knowledge and cannot always be determined through reflection, science or short-term experiences, unless long-term direct observations of human activity and its effects are made over centuries or longer.

For example, it is mentioned in authentic Prophetic traditions that open lewdness leads to spread of sexual diseases; that cheating in weights and measures leads to economic hardships and tyranny of rulers; that withholding obligatory charity leads to droughts; that being content with the world, dealing in forbidden transactions and not striving in Allāh's cause leads to humiliation of Muslim societies and nations; that violating Tawhīd and leaving Prophetic guidance leads to subjugation and plunder by enemies. Many correlations can be found in the Qur'ān and Prophetic traditions between human acts and negative, harmful consequences which cannot be discovered through reason alone.

Thus, one should not belittle the affair of sin, because everything Allāh has prohibited brings harm to the individual and the society. Allāh gains nothing and loses nothing from His servants if they choose to sin, the harms only return upon them. Thus, the first goal is to prevent as much spillage as possible, both major and minor.

☞ Spoilage.

Water can be spoiled in terms of its colour, odour and taste. Faith can be spoiled through desires, which are sins, they relate to **matters of action, whether of the hearts or limbs**. Sins cause spillage as has preceded and every instance of sin has a *spoiling effect* on whatever remains. The more one indulges in sin, the more discolouration, distaste and malodour takes place in the water (faith). But more serious is that faith can also be spoiled through desires of another kind, which are more harmful than the ones just discussed.

They are **heresies and innovations** and relate to **matters of knowledge and worship**. They are more harmful than sins because when a person sins, he knows wrong has been committed. A person never take sin as a path to be followed in religion. No one says, "My path in religion is to drink, steal, murder, gamble and fornicate". But with heresies and innovations, once a person falls into them, he will consider them to be truth and guidance. A person's faith can be corrupted and spoiled through false, heretical doctrines, innovated forms of worship and methodologies. He or she takes them as a path to be followed in religion. The Prophet (ﷺ) prophesied that the fate of previous nations of differing and division will happen to the Muslim nation. He said: "*The Jews split into 71 sects, the Christians split into 72 sects, and this nation will split into 73 sects.*"⁷⁷

Due to the factors of: influences from other nations;⁷⁸ ignorance of texts; specific political circumstances; and the activities of hypocrites and subversives, numerous ideas crept into the Muslim nation

⁷⁷ *Ṣaḥīḥ Sunan Abī Dāwūd* (no. 4596) and *Ṣaḥīḥ Sunan al-Tirmidhī* (no. 2640).

⁷⁸ Such as the Jews, Christians, Sabians, Greeks, Hindus and Buddhists. As Islām spread to distant lands, the prior doctrinal baggage of nations helped to shape new, innovated ideas that were ascribed to Islām and its texts.

through certain individuals. They tried to reconcile them with the revealed texts, leading to innovations and heresies, and then became callers to these doctrines in the name of Islām. This led to the emergence of sects and the splitting of the Muslim nation.

These sects and their ideas—despite appearing so long ago—continue to exist today. They may not be readily identified because often names and labels change though the realities remain the same. Here are the main sects to appear in the history of Islām whose doctrines—for the most part—have survived till today and are the causes of continued differing and sectarianism among Muslims.

1. Khārijites: They are the precursors to modern-day extremist and terrorist groups such as al-Qaeda, ISIS (Daesh), Boko Haram and others. They appeared due to discontent in material matters and revolted against the Muslim rulers whom they accused of not judging by justice. They later judged those who commit sins to be disbelievers and claimed they will reside eternally in the Hellfire. They killed two of the greatest companions of the Prophet (ﷺ), 'Uthmān and 'Alī (رضي الله عنه), the third and fourth caliphs of Islām respectively and also tried to assassinate the leaders of the Muslims in Syria and Egypt, both of whom were the Prophet's Companions. They oppressively justify the killing of Muslim men, women and children through their pseudo-scholarship.

Their continued appearance within the Muslim nation was foretold by the Prophet in many authentic traditions who described them as "*the most evil of creation*" and "*dogs of hellfire*". They are *zealous yet ignorant* revolutionaries whom the leaders of the Muslims are ordered to fight when they manifest their evil. A Muslim does not leave Islām on account of major sins, but his faith becomes deficient. A ruler is not expelled from Islām if he does not judge with justice nor is he to be rebelled against. This is prohibited in order to preserve stability and safety and prevent greater evils from engulfing the society. As for the Khārijites, they destroy the worldly affairs, spread fear, destabilise nations and allow outside predatory elements to intervene and take advantage for their own goals. In effect, they are a **destructive Trojan horse**, beneficial not to Muslims and Muslim societies, but to all hostile elements with designs and agendas.

2. **Shī'ites:** They exaggerated the status of 'Alī, the fourth caliph and cousin of the Prophet, and claimed he was the rightful heir to political leadership after the Prophet. Then 'Alī was claimed to have been the intended recipient of the Qur'ān instead of Muḥammad (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ). Then he was claimed to have been inhabited by the "Spirit of God". Finally, he was claimed to have been God himself similar to how the Christians claimed God became incarnate in Jesus (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام).

They claimed that the Qur'ān has hidden, esoteric meanings known only to 'Alī and his offspring and that true Islām could only be known and conveyed through their lineage. They declared virtually all of the Prophet's companions to be disbelievers and slandered the wives of the Prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ). Many secretive, esoteric movements adopted the face of Shī'ism as a veil to infiltrate Islām and its people.⁷⁹ Today, the main body of Shī'ites is concentrated in Irān—formerly Zoroastrian Persia—which has proxies in the Sunnī lands. The Scholars of Islām do not consider anyone who believes in these doctrines to be a Muslim. From the great foundations of Islām is to love, respect and honour the members of the Prophet's household which includes his wives and likewise all his companions. It is pure hypocrisy to hate them all or the overwhelming majority of them.

3. **Qadarites:** They rejected the divine determination and decree and were comprised of two groups. The first group appeared in the time of the Companions and claimed that Allāh does not have prior knowledge of events, which is disbelief. The second claimed that man is an independent creator of his own deeds outside the domain of Allāh's creative power. The errors in these views have been discussed earlier. Though this group died out, their ideas were inherited by others, such as the Mu'tazilites and Shī'ites.

4. **Murji'ites:** They claimed faith is restricted to the heart's belief alone, or to the heart's belief and tongue's affirmation alone and that

⁷⁹ The Bātiniyyah (esoteric) groups include the Qarāmiṭah, 'Ubaydiyyah, Qāzilbāsh, Khurramiyah, Hashshāshīn and others. They brought together a mixture of Persian, Magian beliefs, Greek philosophy and the external face of Shī'ism as a means of misguiding Muslims.

deeds are not from the reality of faith and that faith does not increase or decrease. Hence, they expelled deeds from the reality of faith and asserted that they were not essential for salvation. This is similar to what Paul (Saul of Tarsus) did with respect to the teachings of Jesus (عيسى عليه السلام). He abolished the necessity of the law in salvation, thereby disfiguring the religion of Jesus, which was Islām, *inward submission with outward compliance*.

The Murji'ites were of varying levels in error and misguidance: Those who say faith is knowledge (ma'rifah) of Allāh's existence alone (which would render Satan and most non-Muslims to be believing Muslims) and they are the Jahmites; those who say faith is the heart's assent (taṣdīq) alone as is said by the Ash'arites; those who say it is only the expression of faith on the tongue alone as was said by the Karrāmites; and those who say it is the heart's belief coupled with the tongue's affirmation alone. They all divorced works from faith.

5. Jahmites: They employed Greek philosophical concepts—acquired through argumentation with Hellenized Jews, Sabians and Christians—to formulate a new, innovated theology regarding Allāh's *essence, names, attributes and actions*. It led them to reject the names, attributes and actions of Allāh through philosophical speculations. The approach of this group in this field were inherited by other sects such as the Mu'tazilites, Ash'arites and Māturīdites. They also exaggerated in the divine decree and claimed man has no free will at all and is compelled in his actions. They also claimed that faith is *mere knowledge* of Allāh's existence in the heart and nothing more. This doctrine is an invalidation of Islām from its very foundations, since it treats everyone who inwardly acknowledges a creator [such as Jews, Christians, Hindus, Satan, Pharaoh and others] to be Muslims. As a general rule, this sect is not considered to be within Islām in the view of orthodox scholars of the Muslims. However, any person caught up in these doctrines is treated individually.

6. Mu'tazilites: This group inherited and championed the Qadarite belief that man creates his own actions independently and the belief of the Jahmites in negating Allāh's names, attributes and actions. They put reason over revelation, and claimed that when the two

clash, reason is given preference. They created turmoil at the end of the second century of Islām through inquisitions, instigating the rulers to slaughter thousands of Muslim scholars who rejected their heretical doctrines. They are represented by the Modernists of today who undermine the Qur'ān and Prophetic traditions through the application of short-sighted, subjective reason.

7. Šūfīs: The starting point of Šūfism appears to the naive and unwary as an innocent form of spirituality and purifying the soul. However, this is only the adornment of the beginning of its spectrum. Its end point is a philosophical, mystical system comprising the doctrine that nothing exists except Allāh, that all of existence is but Allāh—an idea called *the unity of existence* (waḥdat al-wujūd) and hence, everything and anything worshipped is Allāh. Therefore, *all religion is valid* and innumerable paths to Allāh exist. The Christian who worships Jesus and the cross is worshipping Allāh. The Hindu who worships the cow, elephant and other animal deities is but worshipping Allāh and so on for all other religions in which other deities are worshipped. Because everything is Allāh and there is no separation between the creator and the created then all religions is valid. This is the doctrine of *the unity of religions* (waḥdat al-adyān) which necessarily follows from the doctrine of *the unity of existence*. As a result, the invocation and worship of saints finds easy justification within Šūfism. Most who enter this path are unaware of its true reality, seeing only the spiritual side, and may never fathom the reality of the system due to the way it is clothed with dubious terms.

These innovated doctrines have been successively transmitted throughout the ages until today. Umbrella groups such as the **Muslim Brotherhood** (al-Ikhwān al-Muslimūn) and its offshoots resemble the Khārijites in their doctrines and activities. From them Ḥizb al-Taḥrīr, al-Qaeda and ISIS. The **Conveyance Party** (Jamā'at al-Tabligh) is an umbrella group for promoting versions and strands of Sūfism. Many **modernist, liberalist** and **rationalist** individuals and groups operate on the principles of the Mu'tazilites. The **Ash'arites** and **Māturidites**, two similar groups that have a large presence today, have inherited

doctrines from the Jahmites, Murji'ites and Şūfis. The Hezbollah are hardcore Shī'ites.

As for the spoilage inherent in innovations in worship, to avoid this, a person must stick to the Prophetic way (Sunnah) in all affairs. This is because the Prophetic guidance has been completed and perfected and it is upon a person to follow and imitate, not invent and innovate, this is the path of safety in religious practice.

The Prophet (ﷺ) said as related by al-Irbād bin Sāriyah (رضي الله عنه), "I have left you upon clarity. It's night is like its day. No one deviates from it except that he is destroyed. Whomever amongst you lives for long will see much controversy, so you must stick to my Sunnah and the Sunnah of the rightly-guided Caliphs."⁸⁰ The Prophet (ﷺ) also said as reported by 'Ā'ishah (رضي الله عنها), "Whoever introduces into this affair of ours that which is not from it will have it rejected"⁸¹ and also: "Whoever does an action that is not in accordance with our affair will have it rejected."⁸² And Jābir bin 'Abdullāh reports that the Prophet (ﷺ) would say in his sermons, "To proceed: Indeed, the best speech is the Book of Allāh and the best guidance is the guidance of Muḥammad and the worst of affairs are the newly-invented matters, every newly-invented matter is an innovation and every innovation is misguidance, and every (instance of) misguidance is in the Fire."⁸³ The Messenger (ﷺ) also said: "Allāh did not send any Prophet except that it was a duty upon him to direct his ummah to every good he knew for them and to warn them from every evil he knew for them."⁸⁴ And he (ﷺ) said, "By Him in whose hand is my soul. I have not left anything which brings you closer to Paradise and distances you from the Hellfire except that I have commanded you with it and I have not left

⁸⁰ Related by Ibn Mājah and it is ṣaḥīḥ. Refer to Ṣaḥīḥ Sunan Ibn Mājah (1/32).

⁸¹ Reported by al-Bukhārī.

⁸² Reported by Muslim.

⁸³ Reported by al-Nasā'ī, al-Ājurrī and al-Bayḥaqī. And it is also related by Imām Muslim in his Ṣaḥīḥ with the wording, "To proceed: Indeed, the best speech is the Book of Allāh and the best guidance is the guidance of Muḥammad and the worst of affairs are the newly-invented matters and every innovation is misguidance."

⁸⁴ Reported by Muslim from the ḥadīth of 'Abdullāh bin 'Umar.

anything which distances you from Paradise and brings you closer to Hellfire except that I have prohibited you from it.”⁸⁵

And the companion Abū Dharr (رضي الله عنه) said, “The Messenger of Allāh (صلى الله عليه وسلم) died and he did not leave a bird flapping its wings in the sky except that he mentioned knowledge to us regarding it.”⁸⁶ The companion ‘Abdullāh bin Mas‘ūd said (رضي الله عنه), “Follow and do not innovate, for you have been sufficed, and every innovation is misguidance.”⁸⁷ The great scholar, Imām Mālik (d. 179H) said “Whoever introduced an innovation into Islām, considering it something good, he has claimed that the Messenger was treacherous to his duty of messengership,” then he recited, “This day have I perfected your religion for you” (5:3) and then said, “Whatever was not from the religion then cannot be considered from the religion today.”⁸⁸

In light of what has preceded all acts of worship must agree with the Sunnah in: *number* (‘adad); *timing* (zamān) where applicable; *location* (makān) where applicable; *specific manner of performance* (kayfiyyah); the *underlying cause* of the act of worship (sabab); and *type* (jins). To illustrate Sayyid bin al-Muṣayyib (d. 715), one of the great jurists of Islām, saw a man praying more than two rak‘ahs after the time for Fajr prayer had entered through the breaking of dawn and prohibited from that. The man said, “O Abū Muḥammad, Allāh will punish me for prayer?” He said, “No, but he will punish you for opposition to the Sunnah.”⁸⁹ Thus, acts of worship must conform in their details and performance with what has come in the Sunnah.

The religion of the Jews and Christians became altered and distorted because they did not adhere strictly and faithfully to the details of the law. They innovated into it and changed it upon their

⁸⁵ Reported by al-Ṭabarānī, al-Bayḥaqī and Ibn Abī Shaybah and refer to Silsilah al-Ṣaḥīḥah (no. 1803).

⁸⁶ Reported by Aḥmad in al-Musnad (5/153), al-Ṭabarī in his tafsīr (11/348), Ibn Ḥibbān in his Ṣaḥīḥ (1/267).

⁸⁷ Reported by al-Lālikāī (1/96) and al-Marwazī in al-Sunnah (p. 28).

⁸⁸ Imām al-Shāṭibī in al-l’iṭiṣām (Maktabah al-Tawḥīd, 1/62).

⁸⁹ Reported by al-Bayḥaqī in Sunan al-Kubrā (2/466), al-Khaṭīb in al-Faqīh wal-Mutafaqqih (p. 147), al-Dārimī in al-Sunan (1/116).

whims and desires. This also led them to dispute amongst each other and fall into schisms. Muslims have been commanded to maintain solidarity and unity through holding fast to the Prophetic guidance in all affairs.

A greater understanding of this subject ought to be pursued as it is outside the scope of this work.⁹⁰

In summary, to avoid spoilage of one's water (faith and works) one must seek the way of the Righteous Predecessors (al-salaf al-ṣāliḥ) who are the Companions of the Prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ), their students and their students. They learned, enacted and transmitted the way of the Prophet. The route to that is through the upright, righteous scholars who follow this way in every generation. Equally as important—alongside seeking the truth and acting upon it—is that a Muslim must know and shun all falsehood and avoid the innovations and heresies which are widespread. The Prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) said: “I have left you upon clarity, its night is like its day [in distinctness]. No one deviates from except that he is destroyed.”⁹¹

☞ **Sackage.** This refers to looting, pillaging and dismissing. When a person is sacked from a job, the job becomes vacant, empty. In our parable it refers to the attempts to ransack you and make you lose your water (faith) altogether, leaving your vessel completely empty, with nothing left, not even a drop. Factions of people exist of varying backgrounds who desire that you disbelieve or return to disbelief if you previously left it for Islām. They have ideological and material motives which are often coupled with hatred and jealousy. If they cannot sack your Īman, they will try to force as big a compromise as possible. Here are the main factions:

1. **Hypocrites:** They exist in all times, proclaiming belief while concealing disbelief. At times they may be upon pure disbelief, at other times closer to disbelief than belief and at times closer to belief

⁹⁰ The concise book “*Innovation in Light of the Perfection of the Sharīah*” by Shaykh Muḥammad bin Ṣāliḥ al-Uthaymīn is available online and in print.

⁹¹ Refer to *al-Silsilah al-Ṣaḥīḥah* of al-Albānī, (2/648), no. 937.

than disbelief. But circumstances and events cause them to fluctuate and change. They can never be known for sure, since Allāh alone knows what is in the hearts of people, therefore we cannot pass judgement upon individuals. There were hypocrites amongst the Muslims in the time of the Prophet (ﷺ) engaged in sedition and corruption. They are countered with knowledge, by exposing their lies and schemes and affirming the truth through the tongue and pen. These hypocrites appear in many forms, shapes and guises: as reformers, modernists, rights activists and so on. Desiring sackage, they wear the cloak of Islām so that their views appear as legitimate internal dissent and hence, more easily acceptable. They desire to undermine Islām, reduce it to irrelevance and thereby make people disbelieve just as they themselves have disbelieved internally, just as Allāh (ﷻ) stated about them:

وَدُّوا لَوْ تُكْفُرُونَ كَمَا كَفَرُوا فَتَكُونُونَ سَوَاءً

“They wish you would disbelieve as they disbelieved...” (4:89).

2. **Apostates:** There are many Shi'ites, Qadianis (Aḥmadīs)⁹² and people of various backgrounds who never understood Islām to begin with or were practising some unorthodox, deviant form of Islām. On seeing the falsehood and repugnance of their doctored version of Islām and whatever injustice and opposition to reason it comprises, they abandon Islām while having many grievances and harbouring many grudges on account of the situations and cultures they found themselves in. Thereafter, they try to convince others to abandon Islām by spreading lies and misunderstandings, thinking that Islām is synonymous with the falsehood that they wrongly thought was Islām. Some of these people turn into Atheists or Christians and with a newfound vigour become avowed haters and enemies. Sometimes, people accept Islām hypocritically and then disbelieve shortly thereafter in order to put doubts into the hearts of Muslims. This practice used to take place during the time of the Prophet (ﷺ) and it is also taking place today, a tactic used by evangelical Christian

⁹² They are non-Muslims to begin with, they believe that Mirza Ghulām Aḥmad (d. 1908) was a prophet, though he was an exposed imposter.

fundamentalists. Allāh already exposed their affair in the Qurʾān so that Muslims can be wise to their plots:

وَقَالَتْ طَائِفَةٌ مِّنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ آمِنُوا بِالَّذِي أُنزِلَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَجَهُ النَّهَارِ
وَآكْفُرُوا آخِرَهُ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُونَ

“And a faction of the People of the Scripture say [to each other]: ‘Believe in that which was revealed to the believers at the beginning of the day and reject it at its end that perhaps they will abandon their religion’...” (3:72).

3. Atheists: They give divine qualities to nature using highly technical and cryptic language as a means of escaping the gratitude they ought to give for the innumerable favours they enjoy on a daily basis, all on account of pride and arrogance. They resent that there should be an authority over the universe and look for theoretical justifications for this resentment. They believe in conjectures regarding the origin of the universe and life and try to convince others of their positively asserted religious belief that life is purely accidental and matter has intelligent self-organising capabilities. When trying to blame Islām (or religion in general) for *poisoning everything* and being *the source of evil*, they forget that the biggest mass murderers in history were materialists, atheists and that their philosophies such as Darwinism “undeniably comforted racists, sanctioned imperialism and actively promoted eugenics.”⁹³ Thinking they are upon something—when all they have is pure conjectures expressed in sophisticated terms—they try to cast doubt upon Islām and the Qurʾān by monopolising upon the mistakes of erroneous zealous Muslim preachers who speak with ignorance and often make unsubstantiated and far-fetched claims.⁹⁴

4. Radical Feminists: There are numerous spiteful, hateful women from Irān (Shīʿism), Africa, the Middle East, India and other Asian

⁹³ Depew, D.J. & Weber, B.H. *The Fate of Darwinism: Evolution after the Modern Synthesis*. Biological Theory 6 :89. (2011).

⁹⁴ An example is what is done by those who *exaggerate* in the issue of the “scientific miracles” in the Qurʾān wherein they wrongly interpret verses of the Qurʾān through the currently-accepted conjectures of science.

nations who have had extremely bad experiences in their personal lives wherein local cultural practices, unjust parental behaviours or family circumstances limited, exploited or harmed them. Being scarred emotionally, they harbour grudges and grievances. This leads them to highly provocative, anti-Islām activity usually in Western lands. They appear as rights-activists and are promoted by private interests and media corporations for their usefulness in shaping and forwarding agendas. They are equipped with selective facts, lies and statistics. They want Muslim women to pour out all of their water (faith) and if not, then as much of it as possible. They presume that intelligent Muslim women who freely choose to protect their chastity and modesty are oppressed, just like they were. They wish to deny Muslim women the freedom to exercise their choice and free will without coercion, all in the name of feminism and human rights.

5. Religious Interests: Evangelical, fundamentalist Christians have large-scale strategic operations in place in order to draw Muslims away from the pure and sincere worship of the Lord of Abraham, Moses, Jesus (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام) and Muḥammad (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ), to the worship of triads, trinities, saviours, spirits and crosses based on a mythical Jesus manufactured with Hellenic, Roman and Pagan mystery religion concepts. They use a sophisticated system of polemics in their missionary activities based upon their ideologically motivated and extremely biased study of Islām, the Qur'ān and the Prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ). They use the presence of extremist, terrorist groups such as al-Qaeda, ISIS and Boko Haram to argue Islām is a false religion, conveniently forgetting their extremely violent past in which they raped, pillaged and wiped out the indigenous populations of America, Africa, Asia and Australia, slaughtering hundreds of millions in the name of Jesus and the Glory of God. They are well-funded, active and collaborate with hypocrites, apostates and radical feminists.

6. Corporate Interests: Muslim inhabited lands in Africa, Asia and the Middle East have drawn tremendous political and corporate interest over past decades because of their strategic locations, extreme resource-richness and very large, economically exploitable, growing young populations. Corporate interests may not be anti-Islām in

principle but nevertheless, they work to undermine Islāmic beliefs, morals and values, purely for financial interests. A strong religious identity is a barrier to social engineering that facilitates economic exploitation and thus undermining religion is conducive to many corporate interests. Therefore, they will work with some of the other groups listed above to serve their own agendas.

7. Political Interests: They are of various backgrounds and desire to usurp Muslim inhabited lands for historical, political, religious and racial reasons and as such, have their share of anti-Islām propaganda. These political interests are powerful, wealthy, have long reach and actively support some of the groups mentioned above. They support vilification of Islām and its adherents through media outlets in order to restrict opposition to the geopolitical activities they sponsor and support in which men, women and children are dispossessed of their lands and homes and often tortured and killed in the process. Killing hundreds of thousands of innocent men, women and children through the instigation of and support for revolutions and wars matters little to such people. Vilifying Islām and portraying it as an inherently violent religion and presenting the distorted Islām of the terrorists and extremists as the “moderate” Islām through the media is the way in which their geopolitical adventures—and what they comprise of the wholesale destruction of nations, their infrastructure and economies—are marketed to the ignorant masses as being just and necessary.

In summary: A useful, actionable parable has been given through which a person can prevent spillage, spoilage and sackage of his or her Islām, Īmān and Iḥsān—the *three levels of sound religion*. **Spillage** arises when a person is not in control of his soul and its whims. **Spoilage** occurs when a person’s faith loses its odour, colour and taste due to impurities, whether in belief or in practice. This diminishes the effect faith has, just like water that has been changed in odour, taste and colour loses its effectiveness. **Sackage** is when hostile elements work to strip a person of his faith altogether, and if not, then to sabotage it as much as possible.

From One Certainty to Another

A person is commanded to strive in the worship of his Lord until certainty comes to him:

وَأَعْبُدْ رَبَّكَ حَتَّىٰ يَأْتِيَكَ الْيَقِينُ

“And worship your Lord until there comes to you the certainty (death).” (15:99).

Imām al-Sa’dī (d. 1956) said: “Meaning, continue at all times in seeking nearness to Allāh through the various types of worship.”⁹⁵ Imām al-Shanqīṭī (d. 1972) further clarifies that the command to worship Allāh in this verse takes the share of the second half of the declaration of (لا إله إلا الله) and that it is conditioned upon the negation of worship of all others, which is its first half. He said: “The Qur’ān has clarified that this will not benefit except when the other part of the statement of Tawhīd is actualised, and that is the one with the negation, which entails the removal of all acts of worship from all deities besides Allāh, the Exalted.”⁹⁶

Hence, the reality of a Muslim is that he or she proceeds upon one certainty—[that none has the right to be worshipped in truth except Allāh alone]—to another certainty, which is death.

Allāh (عَزَّوَجَلَّ) said:

كُلُّ نَفْسٍ ذَائِقَةُ الْمَوْتِ ثُمَّ إِلَيْنَا تُرْجَعُونَ

“Every soul shall taste death. Then to us shall you be returned.” (29:57).

A Muslim should always proceed upon firm, sound knowledge, and always display patience, forbearance, kindness and justice in the course of maintaining his Islām and Īmān.

⁹⁵ *Taysīr al-Karīm al-Raḥmān Fī Tafsīr Kalām al-Mannān*. Beirut: Risālah Publishers (1423H), p. 435.

⁹⁶ *Aḍwā’ al-Bayān (Dār Ihyā’ al-Turāth al-‘Arabī, 1996) 2/112.*

Trial After Death: The Three Questions

Following death, a person enters the **intermediate stage** between the temporal world and the eternal hereafter. This is known in Arabic as the **barzakh**, whose linguistic meaning is *a firm partition between two things*. The barzakh is a realm with natural laws⁹⁷ other than those studied and understood in this world, and hence there are affairs that take place therein which can neither be fathomed by the intellect nor investigated by any tools of investigation.

Whilst these affairs may confuse and bewilder the intellect, they can never be deemed impossible by the intellect.

Ibn Abī al-'Izz (d. 1390), a commentator on a famous tract of Islāmic creed known as al-Ṭaḥāwīyyah, stated: "The legislation (of Islām) does not come with anything that is impossible to the intellects, but it can bring affairs that bewilder the intellects."⁹⁸ Thus, there is nothing that has come in the revealed texts that can be deemed impossible, rationally speaking. On the contrary, there is a sufficient understanding of nature, its laws, forces and elements that point to the perfect plausibility and possibility of such affairs. Such affairs can only be met with acceptance and submission as they have been related from a knowing, truthful source: the Originator and Creator; and this itself is from sound intellect.

The intermediate stage between the world and the hereafter begins with **three questions** which every soul⁹⁹ will have to answer.

⁹⁷ If we refer to everything that Allāh created of the Heavens and Earth and whatever is between them as "nature" [this includes all entities, elements, waves, particles, forces and cause-effect mechanisms], then from it is that which can be perceived, studied and analysed, and from it is that which is imperceptible to human senses and undetectable by instruments. This second category includes the barzakh which exists simultaneously with the world. The barzakh has laws and cause-effect mechanisms that cannot be fathomed, let alone perceived or investigated and whatever takes place therein, takes place in accordance with those laws and mechanisms. The intellect cannot disprove or negate these affairs.

⁹⁸ *Sharḥ 'Aqīdah al-Ṭaḥāwīyyah*, al-Maktab al-Islāmī, (p. 399).

⁹⁹ The soul and the body have different levels of connection with each other depending on the situation and the abode. There are five stages: The weakest connection between them is in the womb as an embryo. After birth,

The Prophet (ﷺ) said: "Verily, the grave is the first of the stations of the Hereafter. If a person escapes [its tribulation] then what comes after is easier than it. If he does not escape it, then what comes after is more severe than it."¹⁰⁰ The tribulation of each person comprises three questions that relate to one's lord, one's religion and one's prophet. The famous tradition related by al-Barā' bin 'Āzib (رضي الله عنه) elaborates in detail what occurs after burial of the deceased and the tribulation that follows.

Within it occurs the statement of the Prophet (ﷺ): "Then two stern angels shall come and sit him up next to them and shall ask him: 'Who is your Lord [the deity that you worshipped]?' He shall reply: 'My Lord is Allāh.' Then they shall ask him: 'What is your religion?' He shall answer them: 'My religion is Islām.' Then they shall ask him: 'Who is this man who was sent among you?' He will reply: 'He is the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ).' Then they shall ask him: 'How did you come to know this?' He shall reply: 'I read the book of Allāh, then I believed in it and accepted it.' Then a caller will call from the sky: 'My slave has spoken the truth, so spread out for him from the heaven, and clothe him from the heaven, and open a door for him from the heaven (within his grave)', so its goodness and its smell will come unto him, then his grave will be expanded for him as far as he can see. Then a man will come to him. His face will be handsome, and his clothes will be handsome, and his smell will be sweet. Then he shall say unto him: I bring you glad tidings of that which will make you happy. This is the day that you were promised. Then he will say: 'Who are you? For your face is the face of someone who comes with good news.' He shall reply: 'I am your good deeds, by Allāh, I did not know of you but that you were quick to the obedience of Allāh and slow to His disobedience, so may Allāh reward you good'. Then he shall say: 'My Lord bring the hour so that I might return to my family and my wealth', it will be said to him 'be tranquil'."

the connection develops and grows stronger as the mind, body and soul grow in knowledge and experience. During sleep, the soul both leaves and remains attached to the body, a minor form of death. After death, in the barzakh, the soul does separate from the body, but not in a manner in which no connection is left at all. After resurrection, the connection is most perfect and complete since there is no more sleep or death or bodily deterioration thereafter. Refer to Ibn al-Qayyim in *Kitāb al-Rūḥ* (p. 44).

¹⁰⁰ *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Jāmi' al-Saghīr* (no. 1684).

In contrast to the believer, the Prophet (ﷺ) described the situation of the unbeliever or hypocrite who is unable to answer or does not answer with truth, but with falsehood: *"Then a caller will call from the sky: 'My slave has spoken falsely, so spread out for him from the hell fire, and open a door for him from the hell fire (within his grave)', so its heat and hot wind will come unto him, then his grave will be contracted upon him until his limbs are caught up among one another. Then a man will come to him. His face will be ugly, and his clothes will be ugly, and his smell will be vile. Then he shall say unto him: I bring you tidings of that which will harm you. This is the day that you were promised. Then he will say: 'And you, may Allāh give you bad tiding, who are you? For your face is the face of someone who comes with evil.' He shall reply: 'I am your evil deeds by Allāh, I did not know of you but that you were quick to the disobedience of Allah and slow to His obedience, so may Allāh reward you with bad.'"*¹⁰¹

This tribulation after death and the subsequent bliss or punishment centres around the three questions which point to three foundational principles of Islām:

- The Lord that one worshipped.
- The religion with which one worshipped.
- The man who conveyed that religion from his Lord.¹⁰²

One's ability to answer these questions is determined by one's knowledge of these principles and their enactment with sincerity and diligence. Allāh will aid those who learned, understood and acted upon these principles by making them firm during the questioning after death and burial:

يُنَبِّتُ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا بِالْقَوْلِ الثَّابِتِ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَفِي الْآخِرَةِ

"Allāh will keep firm those who believe, with the word that stands firm in this world and in the Hereafter." (14:27).

The Muslim scholar, 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Sa'dī (d. 1956) said of this verse: "Allāh the Exalted informs that He will make firm His believing

¹⁰¹ Related by Aḥmad in his Musnad (no. 18557, 18637), Abū Dāwūd in his Sunan (no. 4753) and others.

¹⁰² Those before Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ) will be asked about the prophet sent to them as explained by Ibn al-Qayyim in *Kitāb al-Rūḥ*.

servants. Meaning, those who established what was upon them of the complete faith of the heart which necessitates and produces the [righteous] works of the limbs. Thereby, Allāh makes them firm in the life of the world by guiding them to certainty when doubts (shubuhāt) are presented to them and to firm, resolute intent when lusts (shahawāt) are presented to them. They give preference to what Allāh loves over and above the wants and desires of the soul. And in the Hereafter, upon death [He grants] them firmness upon the religion of Islām with a good end. And in the grave, when questioned by the two angels, [He grants them firmness] in giving the sound answer. When it is said to the deceased: 'Who is your Lord? And what is your religion? And who is your prophet?', He will guide them to the correct answer in that the believer will say: 'Allāh is my Lord, Islām is my religion and Muḥammad is my prophet.'"¹⁰³

We conclude with answers to these three vital questions:¹⁰⁴

☞ If it is said to you: "Who is your Lord (deity)?"

Then say: "My Lord is the one who brought me from non-existence to existence and who nurtured me with His favours. I have come to know Him through His revealed verses (āyāt) and created signs (makhlūqāt). He created me to worship and obey Him by following His command and avoiding His prohibitions. The greatest of what He commanded me with is monotheism (tawḥīd) and the greatest of what He prohibited me from is associationism (shirk)."

☞ If it is said to you: "What is your religion?"

Then say: "My religion is Islām which is inward submission and outward compliance and it is built upon five pillars: To testify that none has the right to be worshipped [in truth] but Allāh alone and that Muḥammad is His Messenger, to establish the five prayers, to fast the month of Ramaḍān, to give the obligatory charity (zakāh), and to make pilgrimage to Mecca if one is able to do so. And Īmān (faith) is belief in Allāh, His Angels, Books, Messengers, the Last Day

¹⁰³ *Taysīr al-Karīm al-Raḥmān* (Beirut: Mu'assasah al-Risālah, 2002) p. 425.

¹⁰⁴ Adapted from *al-Uṣūl al-Thalāthah* of Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb.

and the Divine Ordainment and Decree. And Iḥsān (excellence) is to worship Allāh as if you see Him but though you see Him not, He certainly sees you.”

☞ If it is said to you: “Who is your prophet?”

Then say: “He is Muḥammad (ﷺ), the son of ‘Abd Allāh, the son of ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib, the son of Hāshim who is from Quraysh, and they are from the Arabs, the offspring of Ishmael. He lived for sixty-three years. Forty years before his prophethood and twenty-three as a messenger. He called to tawḥīd for thirteen years at Mecca. When he was in Madīnah, he continued calling to tawḥīd while the legislations and rulings of Islām were revealed to him. He did not depart except after conveying complete guidance, directing to all good, warning from all evil, and fulfilling his trust.”

These are the answers which open the doors to bliss in all three abodes: the world, the grave and the hereafter.¹⁰⁵

At the start of this work, we started with speech about the fiṭrah, the innate disposition, at birth. At the end of this work we have arrived at death, the grave and its trial through questioning. And in between we have established the meaning of Islām with its foundation, pillars, conditions, levels, boundaries and nullifiers.

So all that remains now is to provide some broad, high level principles through which everything you have learned and grasped so far can be tied together and held in place.

And this is done by way of six broad foundational principles that encompass all affairs of religion. Thoroughly understanding them will aid you upon right guidance, by Allāh’s permission.

¹⁰⁵ From the greatest of what has been composed on this topic is *Thalāthat al-Uṣūl* (The Three Principles) of Shaykh Muḥammad bin ‘Abd al-Wahhāb (d. 1792) which has received great attention from the scholars of Tawḥīd and Sunnah and has an abundance of available explanations suited for all levels.

Islām in Six Mighty Principles¹⁰⁶

These are six mighty principles of the religion through which Allāh's greatness is manifested. They have been explained by Allāh in a very clear and unambiguous manner in His Book such that even the common folk can easily grasp them. Despite this however, many of the intelligent of the world have erred with respect to them. If you grasp and understand them, they will hold your religion in place and keep you upon right guidance.

The First Principle: This is the greatest and mightiest of them and it is to make all of religion and whatever it comprises of worship and obedience sincerely and purely for Allāh alone, without any partners. Likewise, to understand its opposite which is associationism (shirk) with Allāh. The majority of the Qur'ān is actually an elucidation of this very principle from many different angles with such clarity that even the least intelligent from the common folk can understand.

However, over the passing of time, Satan presented Tawḥīd to this nation—as he did to those before it—as **belittlement of the righteous people** and neglect of their rights. As for associationism (shirk), he presented it to them in the form of **love of the righteous people** and of whoever followed them. Thus, he led them to treat invoking only Allāh alone and directing all forms of worship to Him as belittlement and disdain of the righteous. And he led them to consider invoking them and seeking their intercession, aid and rescue to comprise love of them and fulfilment of their rights.

For this reason, you will find that most of the associationists who ascribe to Islām—*despite their apparent intelligence and shrewdness*—and those caught up in their snares from the common folk have been misguided by Satan to show enmity to the people of Tawḥīd whom they accuse of having enmity towards the righteous and of belittling them. In truth, the people of Tawḥīd love those who are truthful,

¹⁰⁶ This section is taken and adapted from the mighty treatise of Shaykh Muḥammad bin 'Abd al-Wahhāb (d. 1792) *al-Uṣūl al-Sittah* (The Six Principles) which has also received tremendous attention from the scholars of Tawḥīd and Sunnah. There are many explanations of this brief work from which great benefit can be taken by the reader.

righteous and pious, the dead amongst them and the living. They give them their due rights by respecting them and making supplication for them. However they do not exaggerate in them and give them the rights that belong to Allāh (ﷻ) alone.

The Second Principle: Allāh commanded with unity and prohibited from splitting in the religion and becoming sects through schisms and innovated affairs. This is the second mighty principle. Maintaining unity not for unity's sake in and of itself, but upon the truth that is found in the Qur'ān and the Prophetic traditions as understood and applied by the Companions of the Prophet (ﷺ).

Allāh has explained this clearly and sufficiently in the Qur'ān in such a manner that even the common people can understand, just as He did with the first principle regarding Tawhīd. He forbade us from being like the previous nations who split among themselves and were destroyed on account of differing. The Qur'ānic command in this regard is further increased in clarity by what is reported in the Prophetic Sunnah of amazing affairs pertaining to this topic.

However, just like the affair of Tawhīd, the matter became overturned such that blameworthy splitting in the foundations and branches of the religion was treated as the true knowledge and understanding of the religion. And anyone who spoke of unity in the foundations of the religion and of eliminating these differences was considered either a heretic or mad.

When the Muslim nation split into sects on account of innovations in matters of belief and worship, inherited bigotry in subsidiary issues and developed fanaticism for schools of jurisprudence, they began to consider all of this to be the desired knowledge and belittled the actual knowledge that Allāh revealed. Unity can only be upon the Book of Allāh and the Sunnah of His Messenger (ﷺ) upon the understanding and application of the Companions and the Righteous Predecessors (al-ṣalaf al-ṣāliḥ) and as such, blameworthy differences can only be eliminated by returning back to their way.

The Third Principle: From the completion and perfection of unity is hearing and obeying those [rulers] who are in authority over us. The affairs of the world and religion are not kept upright except through

authority which enables, oversees and facilitates the worldly and religious needs of people. This includes security by which safe and unhindered travel is made possible. This in turn facilitates trade, which in turn leads to provision, sustenance and welfare. Similarly, the daily congregational (jamā'ah) and weekly (jumu'ah) prayers, the two 'Īd prayers and the organisation of affairs pertaining to Ḥajj alongside all other affairs of religion, these are all facilitated by those in authority.

Whether this authority is righteous or sinful, just or unjust, both the affairs of religion and the world still depend on the existence of an authority. Any neglect, sin and injustice is upon the shoulders of the rulers and upon the subjects is to:

- obey the rulers in whatever good they command,
- disobey them in whatever evil they may command,
- fulfil the rights due to them,
- ask Allāh for the fulfilment of their own rights.

The rulers, good or evil, are simply a manifestation of the actions of their subjects. The behaviour of the subjects becomes manifest in the rulers Allāh places over them and in the very actions of the rulers themselves.

Allāh explained this in a clear and sufficient manner in many different ways. He clarified this through legislative rulings in His Book and in the Prophetic Sunnah and likewise by way of lessons and wisdoms through what He willed to take place in His creation through His divine decree.

However, this foundation became unknown to many claimants of knowledge and was forgotten. As a result great calamities entered the Muslim nation—and continue to do so—due to neglect and wastage of this principle.

The second principle pertains to unity of the hearts in terms of the beliefs and methodologies of Islām. The third principle pertains to the unity of bodies behind an authority through which their public affairs are organised. Those who call to these types of unity are rectifiers. Those who call to other than them are corrupters and destroyers.

The Fourth Principle: Allāh explained what is beneficial knowledge ('ilm) and who are the scholars who carry that knowledge as well as their attributes and qualities. Likewise He explained what is sound understanding (fiqh) and the jurists who possess and convey that understanding. Further, He also explained those who are not from the scholars and jurists but try to resemble them. Allāh explained this sufficiently in the Qur'ān and what increases this in clarity is what has been explained in the Prophetic Sunnah regarding this with abundant, clear and manifest speech that is clear for the common person.

However, this matter became the strangest of affairs when true knowledge and understanding were considered to be innovations and misguidance and innovations and misguidance were considered to be true knowledge and understanding. Those who turned these matters around mixed truth with falsehood in this regard and portrayed that the knowledge of His religion which Allāh (ﷺ) praised and obligated upon His creation is not spoken of except by a heretic or insane person. And as for the one who rejected the knowledge which was obligated by Allāh and who authored works prohibiting it, he was considered to be the jurist and scholar.

Thus, it is necessary to know and distinguish the true scholars and jurists from those other than them. The greatest scholars are among the Companions of the Prophet (ﷺ) and then among the Pious Predecessors (Salaf) of this nation. What is knowledge ('ilm) and what is sound understanding (fiqh) returns back to them, for they laid the foundations and made the affairs clear. After them came scholars in every era who guided themselves by that heritage of knowledge and understanding and in whose speech, actions and methodologies it is manifest and apparent.

The Fifth Principle: Allāh's explanation of (who are) the true pious friends (awliyā') of Allāh, and how He separated between them and between those who try to resemble them amongst the enemies of Allāh, the hypocrites (munāfiqīn) and the evil sinners (fujjār). His saying is very clear in this regard:

قُلْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تُحِبُّونَ اللَّهَ فَاتَّبِعُونِي يُحْبِبْكُمُ اللَّهُ

“Say if you truly love Allāh, then follow me, Allāh will then love you.” (3:31).

And also the verse:

يَأْتِيهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا مَن يَرْتَدَّ مِنكُم عَن دِينِهِ ۖ فَسَوْفَ يَأْتِي اللَّهَ بِقَوْمٍ يُحِبُّهُمْ
وَيُحِبُّونَهُ

“O you who believe, whoever amongst you turns his back on his religion, then soon will Allāh bring another people whom He loves and they will love Him.” (5:54), to the end of the verse.

And also the verse:

أَلَا إِنَّ أَوْلِيَاءَ اللَّهِ لَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ

“Verily, the allies of Allāh, they do not fear, nor do they grieve, those who believed and used to be pious.” (Yunus 10:62).

He mentioned among their traits that they believe in all that must be believed in, obey the Messenger, follow his laws and commands, do not turn their backs on their religion through non-observance and observe piety. As a result they are not caused to fear or grieve.

But then the affair became such—to most of those who claimed knowledge and claimed to be guides for the creation and protectors of the legislation, such as those among the extremist Şūfīs and their likes—that they considered it necessary to abandon following the Messenger in order to be a friend and ally to Allāh. They asserted that whoever followed the Messenger was not from the friends and allies of Allāh. This is because they claimed to take directly from Allāh and that to take from the Messenger is to take from the dead. They claimed that they acquire higher truths directly from Allāh and are not obliged to observe and follow the law of the Messenger and nor are they obliged to strive in the path of Allāh. They claimed that this only for the common people. Hence, they claimed that in order to be a friend and ally of Allāh one must leave faith and piety and leave observance of the law and striving in the path of Allāh.

So the likes of these are not the true friends and allies of Allāh, rather they are His enemies and the enemies of His Messengers. Thus, one must beware of them and not be deceived by them.

The Sixth Principle: Recognising, refuting and rejecting the doubt devised by Satan which calls for the abandonment of the Qur'ān and the Prophetic Sunnah and to follow instead the divergent opinions and desires with bigotry and partisanship. This doubt is that it is not possible for anyone to know the Qur'ān and the Sunnah except the erudite jurist who has reached the utmost level of scholarship (mujtahid muṭlaq). Such requirements and conditions are specified for this person that are perhaps not even found completely with the best of the Prophet's companions. Then, anyone who does not meet these requirements and possess these qualities, must, as a matter of obligation, turn away from the Book and the Prophetic Sunnah. Anyone who sought guidance from them without meeting such requirements is either a heretic or a mad person. This is because of the extreme difficulty in understanding the Qur'ān and Sunnah as they allege.

And this is the most futile of doubts which is invalidated in the Qur'ān and the Sunnah. For the guidance therein is plain and clear in the majority of the foundations and branches of the religion, with respect to the pillars of Islām and Īmān. There are clear, apparent affairs relating to Tawḥīd and its evidence. Clear texts regarding commands, prohibitions, encouragement of virtuous qualities, mention of the affairs of the unseen such as Resurrection, Paradise, Hellfire and so on which all people can understand. There are some affairs which only the learned scholars understand which require deeper understanding. And there are some affairs whose realities only Allāh knows. Allāh has commanded everyone to seek knowledge, understanding and insight in their religion—*according to their capacities*—through which they are able to fulfil their basic obligations. He also commanded them to ask the people of knowledge about things they do not know or cannot grasp.

Hence, this is a futile, evil and harmful doubt and its refutation is found in abundance in the Qur'ān and Prophetic traditions.

In summary:

The first principle demonstrates the reality of Tawḥīd and the reality of its opposite, which is associationism (shirk). It mentions how

people are misguided away from Tawḥid through unfounded sentiments and exaggerated emotions and how such sentiments and emotions can overtake even the most intelligent of people.

The second principle establishes the necessity of unity and highlights the prohibition of differing and splitting. The unity of the hearts lies only in agreeing upon and adhering to the foundations of the religion as they were understood by the Righteous Predecessors (Salaf) and shunning everything and everyone that opposes them. Every unity besides this is misguided and has unstable foundations that will never last. **The third principle** establishes the necessity of unity at the physical level and is achieved by hearing and obeying those in authority in whatever is good (ma'rūf). Great harms have come by the neglect and wastage of this principle, often in the name of removing injustice, wherein haste and lack of insight into the true and real causes of tyranny and injustice have led to evils greater than the ones being complained about in the first place.

The fourth principle relates to distinguishing between genuine scholars and those who try to resemble them. Since the life of the hearts is through authentic, beneficial knowledge and since that is acquired through scholars who are inheritors of the sciences of the Prophets, then distinguishing between genuine scholars from those besides them is vital for the preservation of sound religion. **The fifth principle** relates to distinguishing between the pious friends and allies of Allāh from those who try to resemble them from the liars, imposters, hypocrites and sinful ones. Since people naturally respect those who display piety and rectitude, it is a must for them to know and distinguish genuine piety built upon sound foundations, which is Tawḥīd, obedience to the Messenger, and the way of the Salaf, and fake piety built upon the nullification of Tawḥīd, disobedience to the Messenger and abandonment of the way of the Salaf.

The sixth principle relates to the doubt which invites a person to remain ignorant, discourages learning and calls to abandonment of acting upon the Qur'ān and the Sunnah by making the acquisition of knowledge of the religion appear extremely difficult and something only the erudite and intellectual elite engage in.

These six mighty principles are broad and comprehensive in their nature and comprise all aspects of the religion.

Closing Notes

Finally, the reader should know and understand that mankind was once united upon Islām. Allāh (عَزَّوَجَلَّ) said:

كَانَ النَّاسُ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً فَبَعَثَ اللَّهُ النَّبِيِّينَ مُبَشِّرِينَ وَمُنذِرِينَ وَأَنْزَلَ مَعَهُمُ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ لِيُخَكِّمَ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ فِيمَا اخْتَلَفُوا فِيهِ

“Mankind was [of] one religion [before their deviation], then Allāh sent the prophets as bringers of good tidings and warners and sent down with them the Scripture in truth to judge between the people concerning that in which they differed.” (2:213).

Islām was the message of Noah, Abraham, Moses, all the Prophets of the Children of Israel (Jacob) including Solomon, David and also that of Jesus, John and finally, Muḥammad (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ).

Allāh (عَزَّوَجَلَّ) said:

شَرَعَ لَكُمْ مِنَ الدِّينِ مَا وَصَّى بِهِ نُوحًا وَالَّذِي أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ وَمَا وَصَّيْنَا بِهِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَمُوسَى وَعِيسَى

“He has ordained for you of religion what He enjoined upon Noah and that which We have revealed to you, [O Muḥammad], and what We enjoined upon Abraham and Moses and Jesus.” (42:13).

It is the very nature of Tawḥīd (monotheism) and Islām to unite mankind regardless of race, culture, status, class or language.

Allāh (عَزَّوَجَلَّ) said:

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ رَسُولٍ إِلَّا بِلِسَانِ قَوْمِهِ لِيُبَيِّنَ لَهُمْ

“And We did not send any messenger except with the language of his people to explain clearly to them.” (14:3).

Every messenger expressed the same meanings comprised in the words salām (peace), Islām (submission), muslim (submitter) and tawḥīd (monotheism) in his respective language.

From this perspective, the Prophets are considered brothers with an identical message. The Companion, Abū Hurayrah (رضي الله عنه) reported that the Prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) said, “Both in this world and in the Hereafter, I am the nearest of all the people to Jesus, the son of Mary. The prophets are

paternal brothers, their mothers are different, but their religion is one."¹⁰⁷ Whoever grasps the above will perceive the capacity of this simple, powerful and compelling message to unite mankind—as they once were—upon a simple, innate, intuitive universal truth.¹⁰⁸

Other than the name of Islām, the names of all religions are contrived and invented and do not reflect the true, original message of pure monotheism (tawhīd) and submission (Islām) which every Prophet came with. In their doctrinal formulations, they are in violation of the order, regularity, balance, truth and justice upon which the universe stands and persists. Deviation from this message facilitates the exploitation of man by man and his subjugation in various fields of human activity. This is why Islām is liberating, not subjugating. It is also why tremendous propaganda is waged against Islām by ideologically and materially motivated special interest groups who lose out when people choose to follow it.

In true religion there is only one deity to whom worship and devotion is exclusively directed. There is no racism, class distinction or caste system. There is no superior gene or race. There is no sainthood, priesthood or clergy assuming divine office or holding monopoly over salvation. The connection to the Creator is personal, direct and requires no gatekeepers or intermediaries.

Any way of life that is based upon class discrimination, tribalism or is exclusive to a race or ethnicity is known automatically not to have come from Allāh (ﷻ). If all humans are accountable and responsible then the message should be attainable for every person regardless of race, colour, class and circumstance. The message of Islām is clear, simple and intuitive, and innate human disposition is naturally inclined towards it.

All praise is due Allāh and may peace and blessings be upon the last and final Prophet, Muḥammad, his family and companions.

¹⁰⁷ Related by Imām al-Bukhārī in his compilation of Prophetic traditions.

¹⁰⁸ At the same time, Islām acknowledges cultural diversity and the variant habits and customs of people so long as they do not comprise falsehood, oppression, harm or moral corruption.

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