



**BELIEFS
CONSTITUTING THE
ISLAMIC FAITH**

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Caliph of Allah

Jamaat Ul Sahih Al Islam



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PREFACE

In the wake of the constant erosion of the Islamic values and touch which is becoming increasingly “fashionable” today, God Almighty (*Allah Subhana Wa Ta’ala*) has taught me the explanations of these truths of Islam which make up the faith of the Muslim. These are the essentials of faith upon which each Muslim believer must grip firm so as not to slide in the darkened ravine of this ignorant era.

It has become more and more important to teach the youths of today about our faith, and how to guide their lives accordingly if they really want to be called a true Muslim.

May God guide all Muslims to keep alive the true faith (i.e. *Islam*) in them and to hold fast to the basic beliefs of Islam which make the Muslim a real Muslim (Completely submissive to God). *Ameen*.

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25 December 2015

13 Rabi’ul Awwal 1437 AH

INTRODUCTION

Islam is not a modern concept. It has pervaded the lives of human beings and all submissive creatures of God since the dawn of time. Among all the creatures of God, man – the human species – is the only one who has received from God the gift of free-will, but alas instead of using that gift in the most perfect ways to please God, he instead uses it against his own soul.

His human attire shall expire; only his spirit, of the essence of God shall remain. And those who merit good rewards through their good deeds and conduct on earth shall be the ones who shall be the favourites of God in the hereafter also.

Islam is the way of life of man, his identity, his religion. It is the driving force which constitutes man's identity as a subservient servant of God and his relation to Him. To enable man to follow the right path and to stay away from all kinds of physical, moral and spiritual dirt, Allah sends to him from time to time a Divine Messenger to bring him back on the straight path and to reconnect him with the essence of true spirituality and his belonging to Allah.

To establish man firmly on his faith, Allah has taught him on which basis he should hold his faith. And that include the beliefs which man, especially the true believer must establish himself and hold his faith firm on them. These are what in Islam are called: ***Iman Mufassal*** – the beliefs in the Uniqueness of God, the Hereafter, the Angels, the Divine Scriptures, the Messengers and the Divine Decree and Will.

THE UNIQUE GOD

Muhammad, peace be upon him, was sent to invite people to God and to teach them how to perform the task for which they were created, namely to worship Him. Many of the people whom he addressed had a hazy idea of God. Some did believe in Him, though they associated other lesser gods with Him, but a few of them were downright atheists, or materialists, whose creed was, **“We live and we die and nothing causes our death except Time.”** (Al-Jathiya 45: 25).

Before inviting such atheists to God one must first convince them that there is such being. ‘What reason do you have for believing that there is a God?’ This, logically, is the first question which atheistic view of life should address itself to. The Quranic answer to it is given in the following words:

“...Were they created out of nothing? Or were they the creations (of themselves) or did they create the heavens and earth?” (At-Tur 52: 36-37)

The Quran is here saying that for everything like man that has a beginning in time, there are only three ways of explaining how it came to be.

- a) Either it is created, or made, or caused by nothing at all; i.e. it came out of nothing.
- b) Or it is the Creator of itself.
- c) Or it has a Creator, Cause, or Maker, outside itself.

The third possibility is not mentioned in the quoted verses but it is understood because the verses are addressed to people who deny the existence of a Creator and it is telling them that if there is no Creator then only two possibilities remain. But the Quran does not go into the details of showing why the first two positions are untenable. Clarity of expression often convinces people of the truth or untruth of a statement. Mental seeing here, more than physical seeing, is believing (or rejecting). This is borne out in the case of these Quranic words by a historical event. Jubayr Ibn Mutim, until then, a non-Muslim was sent by the Quraysh on a mission to the Muslims at Madina. He says that when he arrived he heard

the Prophet, peace be upon him, who was leading the evening prayer, reading Surah at-Tur and when he reached the foregoing verses, he reported: *“my heart was almost rent asunder.”* Shortly after that Jubayr embraced Islam.

Why did this happen to him? Probably because the verse made things clear to him for the first time that it is inconceivable for something to come out of or be made by nothing at all, he realized, and it is even more inconceivable that it should bring itself into being. Hence the only conclusion is that it must have a Creator outside itself.

The thesis concerning the denying of a Creator is therefore untenable. There must be a Creator or Maker of everything for nothing comes into existence on its own. But admitting that this is indeed so, one might still wonder why should that Cause or Maker or Creator be the God to whom Muhammad, peace be upon him, invites people to accept and submit to? Why shouldn't it be one of the many other gods in whom people believe or why shouldn't it even be the 'matter' of the materialists? Almost the entire Quran deals with this question but I shall do my best to give a brief answer which would provide the seekers of truth with the basics of the Quranic position.

In a nutshell the answer is as follows: to explain the coming into being of temporal things, the Creator (or Cause or Maker) for which we are looking, must (logically must) have the attribute of the God to whom Muhammad, peace be upon you, invites us. How so?

The Creator must be of a different nature from the things created because, if he is of the same nature as they are, He will have to be temporal and therefore need a maker. It follows that **“nothing is like Him.”** (Ash-Shura 42: 12)

If the maker is not temporal then he must be eternal. But if he is eternal, he cannot be caused, and if nothing causes him to come into existence, nothing causes him to continue to exist; which means that he must be self sufficient. And if he does not depend on anything for the continuance of his existence, then that existence can have no end. The creator is therefore eternal and everlasting:

“He is the First and the Last.” (Al-Hadid 57: 4)

“All that dwells upon the earth is perishing, yet still abides the Face of your Lord, Owner of Majesty and Honour.” (Ar-Rahman 55: 27-28).

There are two ways in which causes produce their effects. Either they produce them naturally or intentionally. The maker that has the attributes I have enumerated cannot be a natural cause. Because if things of this world flow from Him naturally and spontaneously, they cannot be but of the same nature as He is. And if like all natural causes, He causes only under certain conditions, then His power is limited. It follows that He must be a mighty and strong-willed agent. But intention implies knowledge and both imply life. So, that maker must be a living, all-knowing and having a will that is absolutely free. Thus God according to the Quran does everything with intention and for a purpose.

“Surely We have created everything in (due) measure.” (Al-Qamar 54: 50)

“What! did you then think that We had created you in vain and that you shall not be returned to Us?” (Al-Mu’minun 23: 116)

He is absolutely free to do whatever He wills (Hud 11: 108) and is aware of every movement of His creation.

“And He knows what is on the land and in the sea. Not a leaf falls but that He knows it. There is not a grain in the darkness of the earth nor anything fresh or dry, but is written in a Clear Record. And it is He who takes your souls by night and knows what you have committed by day.” (Al-Anam 6: 60-61)

God is a-living person with all that this implies:

“Allah is He besides Whom there is no god, the Ever-living, the Self-subsisting by Whom all subsist; slumber does not overtake Him nor sleep; whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth is His; who is he that can intercede with Him but by His permission?”

He knows what is before them and what is behind them, and they cannot comprehend anything out of His knowledge except what He pleases, His knowledge extends over the heavens and the earth, and the preservation of them both tires Him not, and He is the Most High, the Great.” (Al-Baqara 2: 256).

God is not only willing and powerful, He is also Just in that He does not punish a sinner for more than his crime. He is merciful and His mercy, in the words of the Prophet, peace be upon him, *“overcame his punishment.”* So He does not punish us for whatever we do, but forgives and erases our sins, and magnifies and multiplies our good deeds.

“The parable of those who spend their property in the way of Allah is as the parable of a grain growing seven ears (with) a hundred grains in every ear; and Allah multiplies for whom He pleases; and Allah is Ample-giving, Knowing.” (Al-Baqara 2: 262)

These, and many others which can be arrived at in a similar way, are the attributes which the true creator must possess. Any other being or object which is alleged to be a god or an ultimate cause and which necessarily lacks some of them cannot in actual fact be what it is believed to be. Thus, having shown clearly what the true God should be like, the Quran goes on to show, why there cannot be any god but He, and reveals the falsity of all alleged gods.

To the worshippers of man-made objects it says:

“Do you worship that which you (yourselves) carve, while Allah created you and that which you do?” (As-Saffat 37: 96-97)

“Attribute they as partners to Allah those who created naught, but are themselves created, and cannot give them help, nor can they help themselves?” (Al-Arraf 7: 192-193)

To the worshippers of heavenly bodies it relates as a reminder of the story of Abraham (as):

“When the night grew dark upon him he beheld a star. He said: ‘This is my Lord.’ But when it set, he said: ‘I do not love things that set.’ And when he saw the moon uprising, he exclaimed: ‘This is my Lord.’ But when it set, he said: ‘Unless my Lord guides me, I surely shall become one of the folk who are astray.’ And when he saw the sun uprising, he cried: ‘This is my Lord! This is greater!’ And when it set he exclaimed: ‘O my people! Lo! I am free from all that you associate (with Him). Indeed, I have turned my face toward He who created the heavens and the earth, inclining toward truth, and I am not of those who associate others with Allah’.” (Al-Anam 6: 77-80)

And when, later on, the Holy Prophet, peace be upon him, comes into contact with the Jews and Christians, the Quran condemns their belief in the divine nature of human-beings.

“The Jews say, ‘Ezra is the son of Allah’; and the Christians say, ‘The Messiah is the son of Allah.’ That is their statement from their mouths; they imitate the saying of those who disbelieved (before them). May Allah destroy them; how they are deluded.” (At-Tauba 9: 30)

It means that if everything is created by God, then all is subservient to Him and all His creatures, including His Prophets and Servants cannot be His sons.

“And they say, ‘The Most Merciful has taken (for Himself) a son.’ You have done an atrocious thing. The heavens almost rupture therefrom and the earth splits open and the mountains collapse in devastation that they attribute to the Most Merciful a son. And it is not appropriate for the Most Merciful that He should take a son. There is no one in the heavens and earth but that he comes to the Most Merciful as a servant. He has enumerated them and counted them a (full) counting. And all of them are coming to Him on the Day of Resurrection alone.” (Mariam 19: 89-96)

It then goes on to explain to the Christians the real nature of Jesus.

“Indeed, the example of Jesus to Allah is like that of Adam. He created Him from dust; then He said to him, “Be,” and he was.” (Al-Imran 3: 60)

For someone to take something as a god, it is not necessary that he should acknowledge it as such or worship it in a ritualistic way; it is enough for him to follow it dictates obediently, or devote to its acts or have towards it feelings which should be devoted to or felt towards God only. There are many such unacknowledged gods.

“Have you seen the one who takes as his god his own desire? Then would you be responsible for him?” (Al-Furqan 25: 44)

“They have taken as lords beside Allah their rabbis and their monks and the Messiah son of Mary, when they were bidden to worship only One Allah. There is no Allah save Him. Exalted is He above whatever they associate with Him.” (At-Tauba 9: 31)

Thus to be a Muslim, i.e. to surrender oneself to God, it is necessary to believe in the unity of God in the sense of His being the only Creator, Preserver and Nourisher. But this belief - later on called *Tawhid Ar-Rububiyya* - is not enough. In fact many of the idolaters did know and believe that it is the supreme God alone who can do all this. But that was not enough to make them Muslims. To *Tawhid Ar-Rububiyya* one must add *Tawhid Al-Uluhiyya*, i.e. one must acknowledge the fact that it is this God alone who deserves to be worshipped, and therefore abstain from directing any of one’s acts of worship to someone or something else.

In the Quran the argument for *Tawhid Al-Uluhiyya* is based on *Tawhid Ar-Rububiyya*, i.e. if it is God alone who creates and controls everything why then and to what end do you worship others beside Him?

“O mankind! Worship your Lord (Allah), Who created you and those who were before you so that you may become righteous (have fear of Allah/ pious). Who has made the earth a resting place for you, and the sky as a canopy, and sent down water (rain) from the sky and brought forth therewith fruits as a provision for you. Then do

not set up rivals unto Allah (in worship) while you know (that He Alone has the right to be worshipped)." (Al-Baqara 2: 22-23)

Having known the true God, man is called upon to affirm what he knows, i.e. to believe and have faith in God, and not allow any ulterior motives to induce him to deny a fact which he knows to be true.

"...that those who have been given knowledge may know that it is the truth from thy Lord, so that they may believe therein and their hearts may submit humbly unto Him. And surely Allah indeed guides the ones who have believed to a straight Path." (Al-Haj 22: 55).

"So when Our clear signs came to them, they said: This is clear enchantment. And they rejected those Signs in iniquity and arrogance, though their souls were convinced thereof; so see what was the end of those who acted corruptly!" (An-Naml 27: 14-15)

When faith enters a person's heart, it causes therein certain mental states, which result in certain apparent actions, both of which are the proof of true faith. Foremost among those mental states is the feeling of gratitude towards God, which could be said to be the essence of *Ibaadah* (worshipping or serving God).

This feeling of gratitude is so important that a non-believer is called *Kafir* which means, 'one who denies a truth' and also 'one who is ungrateful.' One can understand why this is so when one reads in the Quran that the main motive for denying the existence of God is that of unjustified pride. Such a proud person feels that it does not become him to be created or governed by a being whom he must thus acknowledge to be greater than himself and to whom he must be grateful.

"Those who dispute concerning the signs of God without any authority come to them, in their hearts is only pride that they shall never attain." (Ghafir 40: 57)

With the feeling of gratitude there is that of love also.

“And of mankind there are some who take unto themselves (objects of worship which they set as) rivals to Allah, loving them with a love like (that which is the due) of Allah (only) - those who believe are stauncher in their love for Allah - If only, those who do wrong could see, when they will see the torment, that all power belongs to Allah and that Allah is Severe in punishment.” (Al-Baqara 2: 166)

Love for God is vital to render worship sweet and to acknowledge His superiority and uniqueness in the most convenient way. A believer loves and is grateful to God for His bounties, but being aware of the fact that his good deeds, whether mental or physical, are far from being commensurate with Divine favours, he is always anxious lest because of his sins God should withhold from him some of these favours or punish him in the hereafter. He therefore fears Him, surrenders himself to Him, and serves Him with great humility.

“Your God is one God, so surrender to Him. And give good tidings to the humble who, when God is mentioned, their hearts tremble.” (Al-Anfal 8: 3)

One cannot be in such a mental state, without being almost all the time mindful of God. Remembering God is thus the life-force of faith, without which it fades and might even wither away. So,

“The faithful are those who remember God, standing and sitting, and on their sides.” (Al-Imran 3: 192)

The Quran therefore prescribes and describes, in great detail ways and means of helping man to remember God and keep his faith alive. All Quranic and Prophetic injunctions and prohibitions which extend to all aspects of human life , acts of worship and personal matters, social relations, political order, etc., are designed to put man in a state which is conducive to God’s remembrance. The details of this Islamic way of life were expounded in the Medina period. But the main principles of this new order were already laid down in the Meccan period, and will be summarized at the end of this chapter.

Let us now deal with the other essentials of faith. These are belief in life after death, in God's angels, His books, His messengers and His decree.

THE HEREAFTER

The Quranic arguments for the reality of another life after death are intended to prove that it is possible and also desirable that there should be such a life and that without believing in it our belief in the true God cannot be complete.

- I. Many of the people whom the Holy Prophet, peace be upon him, addressed in Mecca did believe in a supreme God, but many of them thought that it was impossible for their dead and disintegrated bodies to be resurrected. They therefore mocked and laughed at the Prophet of Allah when he told them about it. The Quranic response was that there was no reason for such astonishment and mockery because resurrection is not only logically but physically possible for the following reasons:
 - a) If it is God who created man in the first place, why should it be impossible for Him to create him when he dies? Resurrection should be easier than original creation.

“He it is He who originates creation, then brings it back again and this (the latter) is easier for Him.” (Ar-Rum 30: 28)

- b) If you think about it carefully, you will come to see that the bringing of life to the dead is a common natural phenomenon. To believe in the possibility of the resurrection of human beings, a thinking person does not need to see a person coming to life again. It is enough to see other dead bodies coming to life.

“And of His signs is that you see the earth submissive. Then when We send down water upon it, it shakes and swells. Surely He Who gives life to it is indeed He Who gives life to the dead; surely He is Ever-Determiner over everything.” (Fussilat: 44: 40)

“Was he not a sperm-drop spilled? Then he was a bloodclot, and He created and formed and He made of him two kinds, male and female. What! Is He not able to quicken the dead?” (Al-Qiyama 75: 38-41)

- II. Why is ‘resurrection’ desirable? Simply because without it, God would not be the Just and Wise and merciful God He is. God has created men and made them responsible for their actions; some behave well but others do not. If there is no future life in which the virtuous are rewarded and the vicious are punished, there would be no justice and the creation of men in that way and the sending of Prophets to them would be to no purpose at all. But this kind of behaviour is not expected of a man known to be rational and just, let alone the Perfect Creator.

“What! Does man reckon he shall be left to roam at will? What! Did you think that we created you only for sport and that you would not be returned to Us?” (Al-Muminun 23: 116)

“Surely for the God-fearing shall be gardens of bliss with their Lord. Shall We then treat those who have surrendered as We treat the guilty? What ails you then, how you judge?” (Al-Qalam 68: 35-37)

“And We did not create the heaven and the earth and what is between them in vain; that is the opinion of those who disbelieve; then woe to those who disbelieve on account of the fire.” (Sad 38: 28)

- III. Is the real and only motive for denying the reality of a life after death that which is expressed by the arguments which the deniers put forward, and to which the Quran replies? By no means, says the Quran. The real motive is often a psychological one. Those who do evil do not wish to be punished and it is this wishful thinking that leads them to deny the reality of a time when such punishment shall take place.

“Does man reckon We shall not gather his bones? Nay! but man desires to continue on as a libertine, asking, ‘When shall be the Day of Resurrection?’” (Al-Qiyama 75: 4-7)

“And none deny it except every sinful transgressor.” (Al-Mutaffifin 83: 13)

A question that is often raised in connection with reward and punishment in the hereafter and which causes some people to doubt the desirability if not the truth of such a life is, *“Do we do what is ‘good’ because it is good or for fear of punishment and expectation of reward? If we do it for the former, then what is the use of believing in the hereafter, and if we do it for the latter we will not be acting morally.”*

The answer to this question depends on whether God enjoins us to do an act because it is good, or whether it is this Divine injunction which makes the action good. And it seems to me to be very clear that the goodness of an act is logically prior to its being an object of a Divine injunction.

The answer to our original question then is that we do what is good because it is good. But since to give good - for good is itself good, there is no contradiction in saying that One does good because the God whom he loves and in whom he puts his trust tells him to do it, and because he expects to be rewarded by Him for doing it. The goodness of obedience to God makes the objective/ object more appealing and rewarding.

According to the Quran God created man of an original nature - called *fitra* - which enables man to recognize without any external aid certain acts like telling the truth and being grateful as good, and by reason of which he is inclined to do good once he comes to know it.

True religion is built on the basis of this original human nature. Religion strengthens nature and brings to fruition the seeds of virtue that reside in it. That is why Islam is said in the Quran to be *fitrat-Allah* and why the Holy Prophet, peace be upon him, said that he was sent only to perfect good conduct. The Quran praises those in whom this moral sense is

sharp and condemns those in whom it has become so blunt that the ugliness of vice becomes in their eyes the model of beauty:

“But God has endeared to you belief, decking it fair in your hearts, and He has rendered detestable to you unbelief and ungodliness and disobedience. Those they are the right-minded, by God’s favour and blessing, God is All-knowing, All-wise.” (Al-Hujurat 49: 8-9)

“Say: ‘Shall We tell you who will be the greatest losers in their works? Those whose striving goes astray in the present life while they think that they are working good deeds.’ (Al-Kahf, 18: 104-105)

“And when he turns his back, hastens about the earth to cause corruption therein and destroy crops and animals. And Allah does not like corruption.” (Al-Baqara 2: 206).

So a Muslim does good because he is endeared to it, and eschews vice because it is detestable to him. But since a Muslim surrenders himself to God and loves and fears Him, and since God loves virtue and enjoins it and hates vice and forbids it, he does the former and avoids the latter in obedience to his Lord. And since those who do good shall in the hereafter live a life of bliss, the highest type of which would be the state of being near to God and enjoying His sight, while those who lead an evil life shall suffer all kinds of chastisement the most terrible of which shall be the state of being deprived from that sight, a Muslim would be wise to always have that future and eternal life in mind and endeavour to do here (on earth) all kinds of work that would help to elevate his position there (in the hereafter).

“Say: Is there any of your associates who guides to the truth? Say: Allah guides to the truth. Is He then Who guides to the truth more worthy to be followed, or he who himself does not go aright unless he is guided? What then is the matter with you; how do you judge?” (Yunus 10: 36).

“Say: If you love Allah, then follow me, Allah will love you and forgive you your faults, and Allah is Forgiving, Merciful.” (Al-Imran 3: 32).

“Most surely the righteous shall be in bliss, on thrones, they shall gaze; you will recognize in their faces the brightness of bliss. They are made to drink of a pure drink that is sealed (to others). The sealing of it is (with) musk; and for that let the strivers strive.” (Al-Mutaffifin 83: 23-27).

Why should one who did good live in such bliss, one might ask? And the prompt Quranic answer is:

“Is the reward of goodness be other than goodness?” (Ar-Rahman 55: 61).

THE ANGELS

These are beings of a different nature from man. While man is created from soil they are created from light. And thus human beings except Prophets - cannot see them in their original nature, but may see them if they take a physical form. Our knowledge of them is therefore almost entirely based on what God and His Prophets tell us about them. But why should we bother to know about them? Because they play a very big role in conducting our affair! To know about them could perhaps be said to be useful to us in the same manner as knowledge of working of natural causes and other people’s behaviour is useful.

We are told that these almost innumerable beings who are extremely powerful are created **“in such a way that they always obey and never go against Divine commands, and continuously serve and never tire of serving the Lord.”** (Al-Anbiya 21: 20-21, At-Tahrim 66: 7)

But in spite of this they are - as a species - in a lower degree than the human species, and this is symbolized in the fact that when Adam was created they were ordained to submit themselves before him as a sign of greeting and respect.

Here are some of their activities in connection with human beings.

Their main task, the one from which their name is derived is that of conveying God's messages to His chosen prophets. This great honour is assigned mainly to their leader Gabriel (or Jibril as the name is pronounced in Arabic).

“Most surely it is the Word of an honoured messenger, endued with power, with high rank before the Lord of the Throne, with authority there, (and) faithful to his trust.” (At-Takwir 81: 20-22).

A message carried by beings of such a nature is sure to reach its destination intact. They attend to and watch over us. They keep a record of our good and bad deeds, and never a word we mention passes without being registered by them either for or against us. (Al-Qaf 50: 18-19).

They play a role in the causation and happening of seemingly purely natural phenomena, like wind and rain and death. (Al-Nazi'at 79: 1-5).

And to them is assigned the role of helping the believers to the extent of fighting on their side in times of war. (Al-Imran 3: 125), and of protecting them (Ar-Ra'd 13: 12), and praying for them. (Ghafir 40: 8).

THE DIVINE SCRIPTURES

A Muslim believes that the Quran is the word of God, but it is not the only word. God sent many prophets before Muhammad, peace be upon him, and He spoke to them as He spoke to him. So a Muslim also believes (in fact he would not be a Muslim if he did not believe) in these earlier books, like the Torah and the Gospel, since the true believers are those who **“believe in what has been sent down to you (Muhammad) and what has been sent down before you.”** (Al-Baqara 2: 42).

“Say: We believe in God, and that which has been sent down on us, and sent down on Abraham and Ishmael, Isaac and Jacob, and the Tribes, and in that which was given to Moses and Jesus, and the prophets, of their Lord; we make no distinction between any of them.” (Al-Baqara 2: 137).

God created men so that they may serve Him. His being a servant of God constitutes the essence of man. Man cannot therefore attain to his true humanity and acquire peace of mind unless he realises this aim for which he was created. But how can he do this? God, being Merciful and Just, has helped him in many ways. He granted him as I have already said before an originally good nature that is inclined to know and serve its true Lord. He granted him a mind that possesses a moral sense and the ability to reason. He made the whole universe a natural book full of signs that lead a thinking person to God. But to make things more specific, to give him more detailed knowledge of his Lord, and to show him in a more detailed manner how to serve Him, God has been sending down verbal messages through His prophets chosen from among men, ever since the creation of man and that till the Day of Judgment. Hence the description of these messages in the final Book of Law, the Quran as guidance, light, signs, reminders, etc.

All these books advocated basically the same message:

“And We sent never a Messenger before you except that We revealed to him, saying, there is no God but I; so worship Me (alone).” (Al-Anbiya 21: 26).

And the religion which they all expounded is Islam, i.e., surrender to God,

“The true religion with God is Islam.” (Al-Imran 3: 20).

Thus Noah (10: 73) Abraham (3: 68), Jacob and his sons (2: 134), the Messengers (5: 4), etc., were all Muslims.

Islam in this sense is in fact the religion of the universe.

“What! Do they seek other than the religion of Allah, while to Him has submitted all creatures in the heavens and the earth, willingly or unwillingly, and to Him shall they all be returned.” (Al-Imran 3: 84).

If the religion of all prophets is the same in its essence and basic foundation, not so are the ways of life based upon it. (Al-Maida 5: 49).

One last important point about books is that with the exception of the Quran they have not been preserved intact, but have either been completely lost or else suffered distortion and corruption. As to the Quran God has decreed that it shall never be subjected to such distortion but shall be preserved by Him everlastingly. (Al-Hijr 15: 10).

THE MESSENGERS OF GOD

Messengers are human beings chosen by God who have the honour of conveying God's message to other men and women. Being such a Messenger is not a position that one attains by any consciously designed effort. It is a grace from God, but God grants this grace to those who are deserving of it. Messengers then do not have the same rank as ordinary people. True, they are men but they are men of an extremely high moral, spiritual and intellectual standard that qualifies them - in the eyes of God - to be the bearers of His light to the world. When God chooses any of them, He supports the messenger with clear signs (Al-Hadid 57: 26) that proves the truth of his claim, and distinguishes him from false prophets, sorcerers and soothsayers. (At-Taghabun 64: 42-43, Taha 20: 70). None of them betrays the message or falls short of being exemplary in practicing what he preaches. (Hud 11: 89).

Asked about prophet Muhammad's, peace be upon him, conduct his wife Aisha said: "*He was the Quran personified*", meaning that he embodied all the ideals which the Quran presents.

Two related points about messengers which the Quran stresses, and which therefore deserve some elaboration are the humanity of prophets and the nature of their task.

Despite the vast spiritual, moral and intellectual difference between them and ordinary men, and despite the special relation with God that they enjoy, prophets are nonetheless humans with all that this term implies. They beget and are begotten; they eat and drink and go about in the market place (Al-Furqan 25: 21); they sleep and they die. (Al-Anbiya 21: 35).

Their knowledge is limited; and can therefore tell only that part of the future which God reveals to them (Al-Jinn 72: 27-28). They cannot intercede with God on behalf of any person except with His permission (Al-Anbiya 21: 29), and it is not left to them to cause people to go in the right path (Al-Qasas 28: 57). In short, they have no part to play in the running of the affairs of the universe (Al-Imran 3: 129). Many early Muslim scholars have observed that to emphasize the humanity of the Holy Prophet, peace be upon him, the Quran called him 'servant of God' on the three occasions on which he was honoured.

“Blessed be He who has sent down the Salvation (Quran) upon His servant.” (Al-Furqan 25: 2).

“Glory be to Him, who carried His servant by night from the Holy Mosque to the Further Mosque the precincts of which We have blessed, that We might show him some of Our signs.” (Al-Isra 17: 2).

“When the servant of God stood calling on Him, they were well-nigh upon him in swarms.” (Al-Jinn 72: 120).

A Prophet whose humanity is specially emphasized is Jesus. According to Christian beliefs, he is particular called Son of God. Why so when he was created in the same manner as Adam was created, i.e. from soil? (Al-Imran 3: 60). He is the son of Mary, not of God (An-Nisa 4: 158); he and his mother used to eat food (Al-Maida 5: 76); he is indeed the word of God (Al-Baqara 2: 46) but since he is a human being in the full sense of the word, this should not be interpreted to mean that there is a Divine element in him. If we say that there is a divine element in him, then we must also bear in mind that all humans have the essence of God in them, for God *“breathed His spirit”* in us, like He breathed in His spirit, modelling us in His essence like He did for our forefather, Adam (as). Therefore, Jesus was only the word of God only in the sense that God said *‘Be’* and he was.

Jesus is thus a loyal servant of God who never claimed that he was divine in any sense. (Al-Maida 5: 117-118).

Messengers are entrusted with the task of conveying God's word to other people. But this is not as simple as it looks. It implies many things which are not clear at first sight, and which the Quran therefore expounds and elaborates.

It puts to light the important truth that the duty of all Messengers is only to convey the message, and they are thus not responsible for peoples' reaction to it, once they have made it clear to them. These Messengers are not to be blamed in any way once their duty is discharged, for it is not for them to change hearts towards acceptance of the divine messages. God has given man the power to understand the difference between truth and falsehood, especially in religious matters, once this has been explained to him. God has also given him the ability, by reason of his free-will, either to accept or reject this truth. And since it is only Allah who knows what goes on in people's minds, it is only He who can judge who is worthy of being guided and who deserves to be left groping in the dark; and it is God who according to this knowledge guides whomsoever He wills to the right path and withholds His guidance from whomsoever He wills. A prophet has no such power, and cannot, therefore, guide whom he loves. (Al-Qasas 28: 57)

“Then remind them for you are only a reminder, you are not one to manage (their) affairs.” (Al-Ghashiyah 88: 22-23).

He should not, therefore feel sad if people turn away from him, or attribute falsehoods to his message (Al-Anam 6: 34-35). But this is a most difficult rule to abide by. In our intrinsic human and gregarious feeling, we love to be accepted by the community in which we live. Many of us must have experienced that strange feeling of sadness, loneliness, and being lost when we come to live as complete strangers in a new community. We undergo a similar but more intense feeling, when as a result of our intellectual and spiritual convictions we come to hold about life and religious views that are entirely different from those of our own community. One easy and usual escape from the psychological and other hardships of such a life is to live in seclusion from society.

Those who, for some reason cannot afford such a withdrawal, more often than not, sacrifice intellectual and religious honesty for conformity with

their community. Prophets have of course to live in the midst of the people for whom they are sent and they never betray their sacred duty to God and the people. To have to cling tenaciously to the word of God, and yet live in the midst of people, is perhaps the greatest difficulty they have to put up with. This is made evident by the fact that most of the few occasions on which the Quran expresses God's disapproval of a certain line of behaviour taken by the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, are related to his being so keen to win adherents as to verge on exceeding the desirable limits.

“You would only, perchance, fret yourself to death, following after them, in grief, if they do not believe in this Message.” (Al-Kahf 18: 7).

“Verily, they were about to tempt you away from that which We have revealed unto you, so that you might fabricate something other than it against Us, and then they would certainly have taken you as a friend! And had We not strengthened you, you would have almost inclined to them a little. Then indeed, We would have made you taste a double portion (of punishment) in this life and a double portion (of punishment) after death. And then you would have found none to help you against Us.” (Al-Isra 17: 74-76).

THE DIVINE DECREE AND WILL

The Divine Decree and Will which are enclosed in the Arabic word, “*Qadar*” entail the belief that Allah has the power to do everything that He wills, and as He has established from eternity to eternity in the realm of the solar system as well as all the universes He has created. In respect to the human species and their relation to God, the Divine Decree and Will means that man cannot go against any decision of God, on earth as well as in the hereafter once God Almighty has decided something for him. For, Allah is for all times while His creatures are but temporary subjects.

The original meaning of the word “*Qadar*” is the specified measure or amount whether of quantities or qualities. It has many other usages which branch out from this core. God says in the Holy Quran:

“God is the Creator of everything, but whatever He creates, He creates with *Qadar*.” (Al-Qamar 54: 50)

From the verse above, the word “*Qadar*” implies among other things, measure, ordainment and knowledge of all things; in what proportion, form etc. it shall be. He knows before creating it, that He is going to create it and that it shall be of such and such magnitude, quality or nature etc. and it is Him who specifies the time of its coming into being and passing away, and the place of its occurrence.

Thus, one who believes in the true God should believe that there are no accidents in nature. If something disagreeable happens to him, he should say “*Allah qaddara (God ordained), and He did what He willed*” and not waste himself over wishing that it had not occurred, or worrying why it should occur. If on the other hand something agreeable happens to him he should not boast of it, but thank God for it.

“No misfortune can happen on earth or in your souls but is recorded in a decree before We bring it into existence: That is truly easy for God; So that you may not grieve for what has escaped you, nor be exultant at what He has given you; and Allah does not love any arrogant boaster.” (Al-Hadid 57: 23-24).

If God predestines or predetermines everything, that includes our so called free actions. But if so in what way can they be said to be free, and how are we responsible for them? It is not difficult to reconcile Divine Decree and human responsibility. God decided to create man as a free agent, but He knows (and how can He not know!) before creating every man how he is going to use his free will; what, for instance, his reaction would be when a Prophet clarifies God’s message to him. This foreknowledge and its registering in a ‘Book’ are called “*Qadar*”.

‘But if we are free to use our will’ a person might say, ‘We may use it in ways that contradict God’s will, and in that case we would not be right in claiming that everything is willed or decreed by God.’

The Quran answers this question by reminding us that it was God who willed that we shall be willful, and it is He who allows us to use our will.

“Surely, this is a Reminder; so he who wills may take unto his Lord a way, but you cannot will, unless Allah wills. Verily, Allah is Ever All-Knowing, All-Wise.” (Al-Insan 76: 30-31).

Moreover, the person might say: *‘If so, God could have prevented us from doing evil.’* Yes indeed He could.

“And had your Lord willed, those on earth would have believed, all of them together.” (Yunus 10: 100).

“But if God had willed, they would not have been idolaters. And We have neither appointed you over them as a guardian, nor as a trustee over them.” (Al-Anam 6: 108).

But He had willed that men shall be free especially in regard to matters of belief and disbelief.

“And say: ‘The truth is from your Lord.’ Then whosoever wills, let him believe, and whosoever wills, let him disbelieve.” (Al-Kahf 18: 30).

But men would not be so free if whenever any of them wills to do evil God prevents him from doing it and compels him to do good.

“If our actions are willed by God,” someone might say, *“then they are in fact His actions.”* This objection is based on a confusion that God wills what we will in the sense of granting us the will to choose and enabling us to execute that will i.e. He creates all that makes it possible for us to do it. He does not will it in the sense of doing it, otherwise it would be quite in order to say, when we drink or eat or sleep for instance that God performed these actions. God creates them, He does not do or perform them.

Another objection, based on another confusion, is that if God allows us to do evil, then He approves of it and likes it. But to will something in the

sense of allowing a person to do it is one thing; and to approve of his action and commend it, is quite another. Not everything that God wills He likes. He has, as we have just read in the Quran, granted man the choice between belief and disbelief, but He does not, of course, like men to disbelieve (to be thankless). He is only trying them through their granted free-will.

“If you are ungrateful, then surely God is independent of you. Yet He does not approve ungratefulness in His servants; but if you are grateful, He will approve it in you.” (Az-Zumar 43: 8).

CONCLUSION

To close such a vast subject is virtually impossible. We must all bear in mind that we have received from God free-will to either do good or evil deeds. While God detests that His servants should follow the evil ways, yet through His great Will, He willed to give free-will to man until the appointed time, i.e. the final Judgement where all human souls shall have to account for all their deeds and intentions. He loves them so much that He sends to them from time to time Divine Elects along with Divine revelations and invest them with the Holy Spirit and gives them angels and men as helpers so that they may warn and guide their peoples and nations to the righteous and fulfilling path, the path which is pleasing to God.

While the other Messengers before the advent of the Holy Prophet, peace be upon him, came with Divine Scriptures, such as the Torah, Gospels, and Psalm among others, but with the manifestation of Muhammad, peace be upon, the bearer of divine light for all times, his spiritual perfection and guidance has been so blessed by God that his message unlike the past prophets and messengers was, is and shall ever be universal until Judgement Day.

That is why, the name of Islam has been carefully chosen by Allah to qualify all subservient servants of God, from the dawn of time till the Final Day for Islam shall ever be the true religion of all past and future messengers of Allah and all true believers who believe in all the beliefs

which God has entrusted upon their hearts to believe. While divine revelation in itself shall never become extinct in the life of man, yet God revealed His perfect commandments in the Holy Quran – the last law-bearing Book till the Day of Judgement – and sent them through the Seal of all prophets, Muhammad, peace be upon him.

While the majority of Muslims nowadays have lost touch with the essence itself of Islam, yet the divine promise is true and shall endure for He shall continue to send His elects, His messengers to both the Community of Muhammad (pbuh) and the rest of mankind to guide them all to the True Islam, the Real Islam, the *Sahih al Islam*; i.e. to reconnect them with the true teachings of Islam and revive in them the true faith which shall see to their reaching to God in the haven of spirituality and divine satisfaction.

May Allah guide all Muslims and all humanity to comprehend the essence itself of Islam, the true faith. *Ameen*.