

THE ESSENTIALS OF BELIEF

Praise be to *Allah*, and may *Allah* raise the rank of Prophet⁽¹⁾ *Muhammad* ﷺ and his *A*l and Companions, and protect his nation from that which he fears for it.

Islam is the Religion of all Prophets of *Allah*, starting with *Adam* and ending with *Muhammad* ﷺ. In Arabic, *Islam* means submission. To believe in the heart and declare with the tongue: "No one is God except *Allah* and *Muhammad* ﷺ is the Messenger of *Allah* " is how one becomes Muslim. Uttering the Two Testifications (*Shahadatan*) is required of the person who is not already a Muslim. A Muslim is a believer and a follower of *Islam*.

The First Testification (*Shahadah*), i.e., "No one is God except *Allah* " means nothing deserves to be worshipped except *Allah*⁽²⁾." The Second Testification, i.e., " *Muhammad* is the Messenger of *Allah* " includes believing that *Muhammad* ﷺ was the last of the prophets, that he was truthful in all he told about and conveyed from *Allah* (as were all the prophets before him), and that the Creator gave us prophets and messengers to guide us to worship Him⁽³⁾ correctly. A Muslim must believe in all the prophets and messengers.

The Two Testifications are the essentials of belief in *Islam*; they are the foundation of the faith. The analogy of constructing a building is useful in explaining the importance of this basic belief. There will be no building without a concrete foundation. Likewise, there will be no benefit and fruitful results in the Hereafter without first having the correct belief.

This analogy illustrates the need to start from the beginning and build upward; before one can remain steadfast in the Religion, one must have the proper belief. Muslims firmly believe that only one Creator exists, Whose name is *Allah*, and *Muhammad* ﷺ is His prophet and messenger. Knowledge

¹ A "prophet" is a man who receives the Revelation from *Allah* and conveys it to the people. A "messenger" is a prophet who comes with some new laws. The prophet who is not a messenger follows the laws of the messenger who came before him. Every messenger is a prophet, but not every prophet is a messenger.

² *Allah* " is the name of the Creator in Arabic which means "The One Who has Godhood, which is the power to create the entities."

³ The words "He", "His", and "Him" used in reference to *Allah* must not be construed to refer to gender. *Allah* created males and females. Hence, "He" does not resemble "His" creations, and they do not resemble "Him".

of and belief in this are the foundation of the faith, and all Muslims are united by this basic belief. The Muslim uses the mind as a guide, because the mind and faith go hand-in-hand. Knowledge is essential, since learning gives one strength and purpose.

The sound intellect and the explicit statements revealed to Prophet *Muhammad* ﷺ affirm the belief in God's existence and His other attributes. One must understand that *Allah* is neither His attributes nor is He other than them. For example: One can say: " *Allah* has the attribute of Power." However, one cannot say: "*Allah* is power." God has no faults or weaknesses. *Allah* the Exalted, is flawless. His attributes are without flaw and are unchanging. God does not resemble any of His creations. If *Allah* resembled any of His creations, then He would be susceptible to the same things to which the creations are susceptible. If *Allah* were susceptible to change, as the creations are, then He would be weak and created-- as they are-- and this is impossible. *Allah* is without shape, without form, and without limitations. He does not resemble anything we see in the universe or anything that can be imagined, since imagination is part of the creation.

Allah exists. Without comparing *Allah* to the creation, one can use common sense to prove the existence of the Creator. When one sees a building, one knows there is a builder; when one sees a painting, one knows there is a painter; when one sees the creation, one knows there is a Creator. *Allah* is the Creator of everything in the universe. He created all places, including the heavens, Earth, and what is in between. *Allah* exists without a place. He existed before He created any of the places. *Allah* existed eternally and places did not. *Allah* exists now as He has been, i.e., without residing in a place, whether this place is the skies, Earth, Paradise, Hell, or any other place in the six directions⁽⁴⁾. *Allah* does not change. Change is a sign of need and need is not befitting to attribute to God. If a thing changes for the better then it was not perfect to begin with, and if it changes for the worse, then it is no longer perfect. It is a fact that *Allah* is perfect. Therefore, *Allah* does not change. He is not in Heaven. He is not inside everyone. He is not everywhere. He does not occupy a space now, He never did, and He never will. *Allah* exists without a place.

Allah is one; He is indivisible, i.e., He is not a body. *Allah* has no partner, no counterpart, no wife, and no offspring. This is understood by the sound mind, because if there were two partners and one partner willed for one thing to be and the other partner willed the opposite thing, then the one who willed what did not occur is weak⁽⁵⁾. Weakness is not befitting to attribute to God; therefore, only one God exists. For the same reason, the Devil does not have control over God, and evil occurs because *Allah* willed it. There is a wisdom behind everything-- even if we do not know the wisdom-- *Allah* knows.

⁴ The six directions are above, below, right, left, ahead, and behind.

⁵ The common sense realizes that opposite matters do not occur at the same time and location.

Allah has no beginning to His Existence. Anything that has a beginning is a creation. *Allah* created every creation, every motion, every stillness, every thought, and every intention. To have a beginning is a sign of need, and *Allah* is not in need. *Allah* has no end to His Existence. To have an end is weakness, and the Creator is not weak.

Allah does not need any of His creation. To need something means to be unable to perform without it, and this is weakness. The Creator is not weak-- it is impossible for need to be among His attributes. *Allah* has the attribute of Power by which He affects the creation. He makes them exist, and He annihilates them.

Allah has the attribute of Will. Whatever *Allah* willed to be shall be, and whatever *Allah* did not will to be shall not be. Both good and evil happen according to God's Will.

Allah has the attribute of Knowledge. *Allah* knows everything: what has happened, what is happening, and what will happen.

Allah hears all hearable things and sees all seeable things without organs and without limitations. Man needs ears and air to transfer sound in order to hear; and he needs light to see. *Allah* does not need any of the creation. *Allah*, with His eternal *Kalam*, orders the obligations, forbids the prohibitions, promises the reward of Paradise, and threatens with the punishment of Hellfire without instruments, letters, languages, or sounds.

Allah has the attribute of Life because he who is dead cannot be attributed with knowledge, will, and power, and consequently, cannot create. *Allah's* Life is not like ours. We need flesh, bones, blood, and a spirit. *Allah* created all these; His Life is not in need of any of them.

Allah created all the creation, and this includes the Religion of *Islam*, which is the only valid and true Religion. *Islam* began among humans with the first man, *Adam*, who was the first prophet and messenger. *Islam* continued through many prophets, some of whom were also messengers. All the prophets and messengers taught "No one is God except *Allah*" and to believe in and follow the prophet and messenger of their time. All the prophets taught that only one God exists. They also taught aforementioned attributes of *Allah*, and the attributes of the prophets. They called the people to *Islam*, taught them how to worship *Allah* properly, and conveyed what *Allah* ordered and what *Allah* forbade. The prophets had miracles to support their claim of Prophethood and to prove to the people what they were teaching was the truth.

Some of the rules changed from one messenger to another but the belief remained the same. The messengers came with new Laws. For example: at the time of *Adam*, Muslims used to pray once per day. They were ordered to pray twice each day at the time of Prophet Jesus (*Isa*). Now, according to the rules of the last Messenger, Prophet *Muhammad* ﷺ, Muslims pray five times per day. In previous Laws of the messengers, Muslims were ordered to pray

in specific places. Now, in the rules revealed to Prophet *Muhammad* ﷺ, Muslims are not required to pray in specific places.

Allah blessed the people with the prophets and messengers to guide them to obedience and warn them against disobedience. Muslims must believe in all the prophets and messengers, because *Allah* blessed them all with Revelation which they conveyed to their people. However, now Muslims must follow the rules of the last Prophet and Messenger, Prophet *Muhammad* ﷺ

Allah ordered the Messengers to convey the Laws, and they did. They taught by words and example. The prophets were attributed with truthfulness, trustworthiness, and intelligence. Consequently, lying, dishonesty, vileness, stupidity, and dullness were impossible to be among their attributes. They were also attributed with impeccability. They never commit blasphemy⁽⁶⁾, enormous sins (such as drinking alcohol and unjustful killing), or object, small sins (such as stealing one grape).

Prophet *Muhammad* ﷺ taught his Companions, and those Companions taught their followers and so on until the knowledge of *Islam* reached the Muslims of the present day. The beliefs and teachings were passed from one trustworthy⁽⁷⁾ *Muslim* to another with a chain of reliable relators back to the Prophet ﷺ. In *Islam*, it is an enormous sin to judge without knowledge. If a Muslim does not know an answer to an Islamic inquiry, then he must not give his opinion or what he thinks the answer may be. Instead, he seeks the answer from someone more knowledgeable in the Religion who attained the knowledge in the aforementioned manner.

Allah created *Adam*, the first man, from a mixture of soils of different colors and different textures. All people are the descendants of *Adam*. This accounts for the various races and temperaments of people. Muslim men and women around the world of all ages, races, colors, nationalities, social backgrounds, economic status, and languages are united by their belief that only one God exists, Whose name is *Allah*, and *Muhammad* ﷺ is His last Prophet and Messenger, and by practicing the same rules of the Religion.

Islam is a belief system as well as a way of life. Only the Creator knows the limits, the weakness, and the vulnerability of all His creation, and He has provided rules for them that are fair and just. *Allah* knows what is good for His creation as well as what is harmful; He knows what is beneficial and what is detrimental.

⁶ Blasphemy includes any belief, action, or saying which belittles *Allah*, His Books; His Messengers; His Angels; His Rites, the well known practices (*Ma^lams*) of His Religion; His Rules; His Promise; or His Threat.

⁷ " Trustworthy" as defined by *Islam* means the Muslim who does not commit enormous sins, does not commit small sins in a way that they will be more than his good deeds, and does not behave in violation of the behavior of those who have his status.

The following five matters constitute the foundation of *Islām*: (1) declaring and believing no one is God except *Allāh* and *Muḥammad* ﷺ is the Messenger of *Allāh*; (2) Prayer; (3) *Zakāh*; (4) Fasting; (5) *Hajj*. The belief in the truth of *Islām* is the same despite the color of one's skin, gender, wealth and one's family and friends.

Prayer, five times each day, is required by all accountable Muslims⁽⁸⁾. *Zakāh* is paying a certain portion of one's money⁽⁹⁾ to specific types of people with certain conditions. This provides for the poor Muslims and those within the Muslim community, whose basic needs are not being met. Fasting during the month of *Ramadan* is an obligation on all Muslims who have reached puberty and who are physically able to fast. This helps the Muslim to feel what the poor feel, and in this way one remembers to care for those less fortunate than oneself. Fasting also disciplines the Muslim and brings Muslims together-- uniting them by a common, shared experience. *Hajj*, pilgrimage as defined by *Islām*, is the journey to the *Ka'bah* to perform, at a specific period of the year, certain actions in *Makkah* and its vicinity. It is required at least once during the lifetime of each able, accountable Muslim. During *Hajj*, pilgrims leave their worldly possessions and perform the same religious obligations in the same way as those pilgrims with them and those pilgrims who performed *Hajj* before them.

Islām also requires a Muslim to be humble and to care about and to respect one's Muslim brother and sister. Islamically, it is not an acceptable behavior to talk about other Muslims or to cause problems amongst them.

Learning the Obligatory Knowledge of the Religion puts the Muslim on the road to self-betterment and excellence. With knowledge, the Muslim differentiates between what is lawful and what is not, and what is an acceptable, valid worship and what is not. What differentiates one Muslim from another is the amount of Islamic Knowledge one attains and applies within one's own life. "The Essentials of Belief" is an insight into the Religion of *Islām*. Believing and uttering "No one is God except *Allāh* and *Muḥammad* ﷺ is the Messenger of *Allāh* is the most important thing any person can do, and it is a condition for the acceptance of the good deeds. The one who becomes Muslim and stays Muslim will have the enjoyment of Paradise without end in the Hereafter, and the one who rejects *Islām* will suffer the torture of Hellfire without end in the Hereafter. It is certain that death will come to all of us. The one who is prepared for the Day of Judgment is the one who knows, accepts, and applies the essentials of belief, and implements the teachings of Prophet *Muḥammad* ﷺ, *ṣallallāhu ^alayhi wa sallam*, in all sincerity to *Allāh*, the Exalted.

⁸ Accountable in this context means sane and pubescent.

⁹ Money in this context includes property, possessions, and wealth.

The truth of *Islam* must be accepted and the Obligatory Knowledge of *Islam* must be acquired and taken if it is from reliable, trustworthy, Islamic sources-- regardless of whether the teacher is young or old, male or female, rich or poor, black or white, Arab, American, African, Indian, Chinese, Spanish, or of any other origin.

**Praise be to *Allah*, and
Allah knows best.**