

Essentials of Islam

Part 1: Articles of Faith

Contents:

1. Introduction	2
2. What are the Articles of Faith	8
3. Belief in Allah	11
4. Belief in the Angels	15
5. Belief in the Books of Allah	21
6. Belief in the Messengers	31
7. Belief in the Last Day	38
8. Belief in the Divine Destiny	46

Introduction – Islam is the only Religion acceptable to Allah

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful

Praise be to Allah, and His Blessings and Peace be on His Final Messenger Muhammad صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ .

Allah says in His Book, Al-Quran, in Surah Ali-Imran:

إِنَّ الدِّينَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ الْإِسْلَامُ

Verily, the only religion in the Sight of Allah is Islam. (3:19)

Allah also says in His Book:

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

If anyone desires a religion other than Islam, it will not be accepted from him and, in the Hereafter, he will be one of the losers. (3:85)

This religion favored by Allah was perfected through the Quran sent down on His Last and Final Prophet Muhammad (Blessings of Allah and Peace be upon Him). Allah says in the divine verse revealed on the occasion of the Prophet's last pilgrimage:

اليَوْمَ اكْمَلْتُ لَكُمْ دِينَكُمْ وَ أَتَمَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ نِعْمَتِي وَ رَضِيْتُ لَكُمُ الْإِسْلَامَ دِينًا

Today, I perfected for you your religion and completed My favors on you and willed that Islam be the religion for you. (Surah Al-Maidah 5:3)

The tenets and teachings of this religion chosen by Allah cover all aspects of our daily life – our beliefs, our dealings with others, and our religious observances. It is, therefore, our bounden duty as Muslims to be aware of these tenets and teachings of Islam. **There is no license for not knowing them, and ignorance of law is no excuse in the house of Islam.**

Undoubtedly, the surest way a muslim can acquaint him/herself with the essentials of Islam is through the study of the Book of Allah and the Sunnah (Traditions) of His Prophet. The Prophet صلى الله عليه و سلم said: I am leaving behind Allah's Book and My Sunnah. You will never be astray, after me, as long as you hold fast to these two. (Reported by Muslim).

A reference to these two primary sources of guidance will reveal that there are no complications or ambiguities in the teachings of Islam, and it should be quite easy or possible for any Muslim to understand his/her religion without any bother or fuss, if only he is prepared to consult those who have knowledge and scholarship. Allah said in Surah Al-Nahl:

فَسَأَلُوا أَهْلَ الذِّكْرِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ

Ask of those who possess the remembrance, if you know not. (16:43)

The Messenger of Allah (Peace of Allah be upon him) himself taught his Companions the tenets of Islam by means that were easy and simple, as would be clear from the following narrations:

1. Ibn 'Abbas (May Allah be pleased with him) reports: There came a Bedouin of the tribe of Banu Sa'd to the Messenger of Allah (Allah's Peace and Blessings be upon him) and said: On you be peace O son of the family of 'Abd-ul-Muttalib.

The Prophet صلى الله عليه و سلم answered: Take it easy o brother of banu Sa'd.

The man said to the Prophet صلى الله عليه و سلم: Who is it that created you and those before you and will create those that will come after you?

"Allah," said the Prophet صلى الله عليه و سلم said.

The questioner then said: Who is it that created the seven Heavens and the seven Earths and put their provisions in them? “Allah”, said the Prophet.

The man then said, “I ask of you to tell me on oath: Did even He send you down?”

“Yes,” said the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم.

The questioner then said: We find written in your book and hear from the messengers sent by you that we must pray five appointed times in a day and night. Say on oath: Is such your command?

“Yes,” said the Prophet.

He then said: We find written in your Book and hear from the messengers sent by you that we take out the surplus from our wealth and give it to the poor. Say on oath: Is that your command?

“Yes,” said the Prophet.

The man then said: There is also a fifth question, but I do not feel the need to ask it (i.e. about self-evident immoralities), and added: By Him Who sent you down with truth I will do all these observances and so will all those men of my tribe who do follow me.

So saying, he turned back.

The Messenger of Allah (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) laughed and said: If he keeps his word, he shall enter Paradise. (Reported in *Majma' Az-zawa'id* 290/1)

2. On the authority of ‘Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) who said: One day while we were sitting with the Messenger of Allah (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him), there appeared before us a man whose clothes were exceedingly white and whose hair was exceedingly black; no signs of journeying were to be seen on him and none of us knew him. He walked up and sat down by the Prophet (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him). Resting his knees against the Prophet’s and placing the palms of his hands on his thighs, he said: O Muhammad, tell me about Islam. The

Messenger of Allah (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) said: **Islam is to testify that there is no God but Allah and Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah; to perform the ritual Prayers; to pay the Zakat (poor-due i.e. obligatory charity); to fast in Ramadan; and to make the pilgrimage to the House (of Allah) if you are able to do so.**

He (the new-comer) said, 'You have spoken rightly.' We were amazed at his asking him and okaying his answers. He [then] said: Then tell me about **Eman (the Articles of Faith)**. The Prophet صلى الله عليه و سلم said: **It is to believe in Allah, His Angels, His Books, His Messengers, and the Last Day, and to believe in Divine Destiny, both the favorable and the unfavorable therefore.**

He (the new-comer) said: You have spoken rightly. He then said: Tell me about **Ihsan (performing actions, especially the acts of worship, in a perfect manner.)** The Prophet (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) said: **It is to worship Allah as though you were seeing Him and in the belief that although you are not seeking Him, yet truly He sees you.**

He (the new-comer) said: Then tell me about the Hour (of Doom). The Prophet صلى الله عليه و سلم said: The one questioned about it knows no better than the questioner.

He (the new-comer) said: Then tell me about its signs. The Prophet صلى الله عليه و سلم said: **It (the Hour) will come when the slave-girl gives birth to her mistress and when you see barefooted, naked, destitute herdsmen competing in constructing lofty buildings.**

The he (the stranger) departed and I ('Umar) stayed for a while. The Prophet صلى الله عليه و سلم then said: O 'Umar, do you know who the questioner was? I said: Allah and His Messenger know best. He صلى الله عليه و سلم said: It was Jibreel (Gabriel), who came to you to teach you your religion. (Reported by Muslim)

3. Imam Ahmad reports that Sa'sa'a Bin Mu'awiyah, the unce of Farazdaq, came to the Prophet (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) and he (the Prophet) recited before him a verse of the Holy Quran whose English translation is as follows:

And whosoever does an atom's weight of good shall see it, and whosoever does an atom's weight of evil shall see it. (99:7-8)

Upon hearing this, the man said: It is enough (guidance) for me, and I don't care if I don't hear anything more. (From Commentary of Ibn Kathir 646/4)

These and other traditions of similar purport make it clear that Islamic tenets are easy to understand and easy to transmit to others. In order to know the essentials of Islam, we do not have to turn to big volumes of books nor do we need to spend long years getting to know them. These and the other basic principles of religion that the Prophet used to convey while answering to the queries of questioners are not the things to be taken lightly or passed over. They concern all aspects of our life – the Article of our Faith, the modes of our worship and the codes of our behavior toward others.

The main purpose behind writing this book is to present before every Believer the foremost principles of Islam in a manner which is neither insipid or boring for being too lengthy nor ambiguous or vague for being too brief. Anyone interested to know more about the faith of Islam and its injunctions may turn to books larger than this. If, however, one only limits oneself to the study of this small book, he/she will surely find it sufficient to make him/her aware of the essential teachings of Islam which could be studied under the following headings:

1. Articles of Faith (Eman) in Islam
2. The Pillars of Islam
3. Things allowed and not allowed in Islam

The book is accordingly divided into the following three chapters:

A. Chapter 1 dealing with the following six Articles of Faith:

1. Belief in Allah
2. Belief in Angels
3. Belief in the Messengers of Allah
4. Belief in the books of Allah
5. Belief in the Last Day
6. Belief in Divine Destiny, the good and the evil thereof

B. Chapter 2 dealing with the following Pillars of Islam.

1. Testimony that there is no god but Allah and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah
2. Performing Prayers
3. Paying Zakat (poor-due)
4. Fasting in Ramadan
5. Making pilgrimage to the house of Allah

C. Chapter 3 dealing with the Lawful and the Unlawful in the following activities of life:

1. The unlawful in food and drink
2. The unlawful in clothes and ornaments
3. The unlawful in professions
4. The unlawful in matters of sex
5. The unlawful in family relationships
6. The unlawful in customs and traditions
7. The unlawful in financial matters
8. The unlawful in social matters
9. The unlawful in behavior toward animals and other living creatures

Chapter 1 – Articles of Faith

What are the Articles of Faith:

Allah says in His Book:

Al-Baqarah, verse 285:

آمَنَ الرَّسُولُ بِمَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْهِ مِنْ رَبِّهِ وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ كُلُّ آمَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَمَلَائِكَتِهِ وَكُتُبِهِ
وَرُسُلِهِ لَا نُفَرِّقُ بَيْنَ أَحَدٍ مِنْ رُسُلِهِ وَقَالُوا سَمِعْنَا وَأَطَعْنَا غُفْرَانَكَ رَبَّنَا وَإِلَيْكَ
الْمَصِيرُ ﴿2:285﴾

The Messenger believes in what has been sent down to him by his Lord and so do the faithful. They all believe in Allah and His Angels, His Books, and His Messengers. (2:285)

He also says, in Surah Al-Nisa, verse 136:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا آمِنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ وَالْكِتَابِ الَّذِي نَزَّلَ عَلَى رَسُولِهِ
وَالْكِتَابِ الَّذِي أُنزِلَ مِنْ قَبْلُ وَمَنْ يَكْفُرْ بِاللَّهِ وَمَلَائِكَتِهِ وَكُتُبِهِ وَرُسُلِهِ وَالْيَوْمِ
الْآخِرِ فَقَدْ ضَلَّ ضَلَالًا بَعِيدًا ﴿4:136﴾

O the Believers: Believe in Allah and His Messenger, in the Book He has sent down to His Messenger, and in the Book He sent down before. He who denies (the divinity of) Allah and (the existence of) His Angels and denies His Books, His Messengers, and the Last Day, he surely has gone far astray. (4:136)

Similarly, the Prophet صلى الله عليه و سلم is reported to have said in reply to the angel Gabriel's question about Eman:

((It is to believe in Allah, His Angles, His Books, His Messengers, and the Last Day, and to believe in Divine Destiny, both the favorable and the unfavorable thereof. (Reported by Muslim)

Eman lexically means 'confirmation.' In the Islamic context it means one's affirmation of belief, from the core of one's heart, in Allah's being One and without a partner; in the Books revealed by Allah; in the Messengers sent by Him; in the inevitability of the Last Day; and in the Divine nature of Destiny, the favorable and the unfavorable thereof.

It would thus be clear from the references cited above that there are the following six Articles of Faith in Islam:

1. Belief in Allah
2. Belief in Angels
3. Belief in Messengers
4. Belief in Heavenly Books
5. Belief in the Last Day
6. Belief in Divine Destiny, the good and the evil thereof

These six Articles of Faith are in fact a collectivity. They all have to be believed at one and the same time. One cannot, for example, believe in Allah and deny His Messengers and be a Muslim. Allah says in Surah Al-Nisa, verse 150-151:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَكْفُرُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَرُسُلِهِ وَيُرِيدُونَ أَنْ يُفَرِّقُوا بَيْنَ اللَّهِ وَرُسُلِهِ وَيَقُولُونَ
نُؤْمِنُ بِبَعْضٍ وَنَكْفُرُ بِبَعْضٍ وَيُرِيدُونَ أَنْ يَتَّخِذُوا بَيْنَ ذَلِكَ سَبِيلًا ﴿4:150﴾

أُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْكَافِرُونَ حَقًّا وَأَعْتَدْنَا لِلْكَافِرِينَ عَذَابًا مُهِينًا ﴿4:151﴾

Those that deny Allah and His Messengers, and those who draw a line between Allah and His Messengers, saying: We believe in some but deny others thus pursuing a path in between, these indeed are the unbelievers, and for the unbelievers We have prepared a shameful torment. (4:150-151)

The above noted verse is clear in its meaning and purport and is firm on the point that Islam does not permit any sort of compromise on essentials.

We may now discuss at some length each of these essentials.

1- Belief in Allah

In order to bring home to our minds the fact of the existence of a Supreme Being (Allah), the Quran says in its inimitable style:
Al-Baqarah, verse 164

إِنَّ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَاخْتِلَافِ اللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ وَالْفُلْكِ الَّتِي تَجْرِي فِي
الْبَحْرِ بِمَا يَنْفَعُ النَّاسَ وَمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مِنْ مَاءٍ فَأَحْيَا بِهِ الْأَرْضَ
بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا وَبَثَّ فِيهَا مِنْ كُلِّ دَابَّةٍ وَتَصْرِيفِ الرِّيَّاحِ وَالسَّحَابِ الْمُسَخَّرِ بَيْنَ
السَّمَاءِ وَالْأَرْضِ لَآيَاتٍ لِقَوْمٍ يَعْقِلُونَ ﴿2:164﴾

[i]

Verily, in the creation of the heavens and the earth; in the succession of night and day; in the ships that speed through the sea with what is beneficial to man; in the water that Allah sends down from the sky and with which He revives the earth after its death, dispersing over it all manner of beasts; in the change of the winds; and in the clouds that are subjugated between the earth and the sky – surely in all these are signs (of His Divinity) for people who understand. (2:164)

[i]

There can be no doubt that if a person uses his/her intellect, looks at the world around him and reflects upon all the signs that Allah has created in the universe and in man's own body, he/she will surely get the faith that Allah is the Supreme Creator who is absolutely One without an associate or partner and Singular without a copy or duplicate.

As for those who ascribe partners to Him, the Quran asks them to bring forth their proofs in the following terms:

Luqman, verse 11:

هَذَا خَلْقُ اللَّهِ فَأَرُونِي مَاذَا خَلَقَ الَّذِينَ مِنْ دُونِهِ بَلِ الظَّالِمُونَ فِي ضَلَالٍ

﴿31:11﴾ مُبِينٍ

Such is Allah's creation. Now show me what the others besides Him have created. (31:11)

Al-Nahl, verse 17:

أَفَمَنْ يَخْلُقُ كَمَنْ لَا يَخْلُقُ أَفَلَا تَذَكَّرُونَ ﴿16:17﴾

*Is He, then, Who creates (everything) like him who creates nothing?
(16:17)*

So anyone who believes in the existence of Allah and His Singleness will also believe that He is the repository of all those attributes of perfection which He has affirmed for Himself, and all the beautiful names belong only to Him.

Surely, there is no god except Him. He is the Beneficent, the Merciful, the Monarch, the Holy One, the Giver of peace, the Keeper of faith, the Dominant, the Mighty, the Compeller, the Deserving of all pride, the Creator, the Evolver, the Bestower of forms, the Pardoner, the Subduer, the Bestower of bounties, the Giver of sustenance, the Opener, the Omniscient, the Restrainer, the Stretcher, the Humbler, the Exalter, the Bestower of honor, the Giver of disgrace, the All-Hearing, the All-Seeing, the Arbitrator, the Just, the Gracious, the All-knowing, the

Forebearing, the Immense, the Forgiving, the Acknowledger of gratitude, the Exalted, the Great, the Protector, the Controller, the Reckoner, the Majestic, the Generous, the Vigilant, the Responsive, the Ample-Giving, the All-Wise, the Loving, the Glorified, the Resurrector, the Witness, the True One, the Trustee, the Powerful, the Firm, the Supporter, the Praiseworthy, the Counter, the Originator, the Restorer, the Giver of life, the Causer of death, the Ever-Living, the Eternal Guardian, the Bringer into existence, the Glorious, the One, the Singular, the Absolute Master and Refuge for all, the Omnipotent, the Sovereign, the Expediter, the Delayer, the First, the Last, the Evident, the Hidden, the Defender, the Most High, the Source of piety, the Relenting, the Avenger, the Forgiver, the Affectionate, the Owner of dominion, the Lord of majesty and bounty, the Equitable, the Gatherer, the Self-Sufficient, the Enricher, the Preventer, the Distresser, the Beneficial, the Illuminator, the Guide, the Inventor, the Everlasting, the Inheritor, the Rightly Directing, the Patient.

Everything is perishable except Him. To Him belong all the beautiful names. All that is in the heavens and the earth glorifies Him. He is the Mighty, the Wise. Any believing person who recognizes that all the attributes of perfection and all the beautiful names belong to Allah alone and whoso desires to submit to His guidance must also try to emulate the morals of Allah; that is to say, he should be lenient and kind to the weak, stringent and severe on the oppressor, ever ready to forgive the lapses of his brothers, accommodating in his dealings with others, loving towards his family and children and forbearing and patient amidst the trials and tribulations of life.

One's profession of faith in Allah and His oneness shall however be nullified if he/she:

- i. Associates anything or anyone from His creation with Him in worship.**

- ii. Falls prostrate in reverence or in worship before anyone or anything other than Allah.**
- iii. Harbors anger against or expresses displeasure over Allah or over any of His revealed Books.**
- iv. Deliberately invents lies on Allah or believes such lying to be lawful, or justifies swearing by things and beings other than Allah.**
- v. Claims that Allah has exempted him or anyone else from performing religious observances without any of the extenuating circumstance, such as insanity or minority of age.**
- vi. Ascribes to Allah any kind of debility or deficiency or likens Him to any of His creation.**
- vii. Denies any of the perfect attributes or beautiful names belonging to and particularized by Him.**
- viii. Supplicates to anyone besides Allah for removing a harm or granting recovery from illnesses.**
- ix. Utters words of unbelief, whether in joke or anger or otherwise.**

2- Belief in Angels

The question of belief in angels is closely linked to that of belief in Allah. He, in His Wisdom, chose Messengers from amongst angels and men. The purpose being the guidance of mankind to the right path so that humankind prospers in this world and, in the next, gets entry into the gardens of Paradise wherein rivers flow. God commissioned angels to carry His Messages to His Messengers to enable them to discharge their duty of conveying Allah's Message to fellow human beings and inviting them to the right path.

Angels are creatures of light. God has given them the power to assume any shape they like. They have wings. Some have two, others three or four. They are without sex (gender) and have no carnal desires. They, therefore, never disobey Allah. The Quran says about the angels:

Surah Al-Tahrim, verse 6:

... لَا يَعْصُونَ اللَّهَ مَا أَمَرَهُمْ وَيَفْعَلُونَ مَا يُؤْمَرُونَ

...They never disobey Allah's Command and faithfully do His bidding.
(66:6)

The Quran bears the following testimony about the angels:

Al-Anbiya, verse 27:

لَا يَسْبِقُونَهُ بِالْقَوْلِ وَهُمْ بِأَمْرِهٖ يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿21:27﴾

They do not precede Him in speech and (only) act at His behest.

Al-Nahl, verse 50:

﴿16:50﴾ يَخَافُونَ رَبَّهُمْ مِنْ فَوْقِهِمْ وَيَفْعَلُونَ مَا يُؤْمَرُونَ

They fear their Lord high above them and do all that they are bidden to do. (16:50)

The angels, moreover, are never slack in chanting the glory of their Lord or in prostrating themselves before Him, be it day or night. Says the Quran, in Surah Al-Araf, verse 206:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ عِنْدَ رَبِّكَ لَا يَسْتَكْبِرُونَ عَنْ عِبَادَتِهِ وَيُسَبِّحُونَهُ وَلَهُ يَسْجُدُونَ
﴿7:206﴾

Those who are near your Lord disdain not to worship Him. They give glory to Him and prostrate themselves before Him. (7:206)

Allah has appointed for them different tasks such as:

- i. Supporting His Throne and chanting His Glory from around it:

Allah says in Surah Ghafir (Mo'min), verse 7:

الَّذِينَ يَحْمِلُونَ الْعَرْشَ وَمَنْ حَوْلَهُ يُسَبِّحُونَ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّهِمْ وَيُؤْمِنُونَ بِهِ
وَيَسْتَغْفِرُونَ لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا رَبَّنَا وَسِعْتَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ رَحْمَةً وَعِلْمًا فَاغْفِرْ
لِلَّذِينَ تَابُوا وَاتَّبَعُوا سَبِيلَكَ وَقِهِمْ عَذَابَ الْجَحِيمِ

Those who support the Throne, and those who stand around it, give glory to their Lord with due praises... (40:7)

- ii. Waiting upon those lodged in the gardens of Paradise about whom Allah says in Surah Al-Ra'd verse 23, 24:

جَنَّاتُ عَدْنٍ يَدْخُلُونَهَا وَمَنْ صَلَحَ مِنْ آبَائِهِمْ وَأَزْوَاجِهِمْ وَذُرِّيَّاتِهِمْ
وَالْمَلَائِكَةُ يَدْخُلُونَ عَلَيْهِمْ مِنْ كُلِّ بَابٍ
سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكُمْ بِمَا صَبَرْتُمْ فَنِعْمَ عُقْبَى الدَّارِ

... The angels will come to them from every gate, saying: Peace be unto you for all that you have endured. And excellent is the final abode. (13:23 - 24)

- iii. Meting out punishment to the inmates of Hell:
Allah says in Surah Al-Tahrim, verse 6:

عَلَيْهَا مَلَائِكَةٌ غِلَاظٌ شِدَادٌ

...over it are the angels, stern and severe. (66:6)

(The whole verse is as follows:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا قُوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ وَأَهْلِيكُمْ نَارًا وَقُودُهَا النَّاسُ وَالْحِجَارَةُ
عَلَيْهَا مَلَائِكَةٌ غِلَاظٌ شِدَادٌ لَا يَعْصُونَ اللَّهَ مَا أَمَرَهُمْ وَيَفْعَلُونَ مَا
يُؤْمَرُونَ

O you who have believed, protect yourselves and your families from a Fire whose fuel is people and stones, over which are [appointed] angels, harsh and severe; they do not disobey Allah in what He commands them but do what they are commanded. (66:6)

iv. Coming down with Allah's Revelations to his Prophets and Messengers, with Jibril (Gabriel) as their chief. The Quran testifies thus in Surah Al-Shu'araa, verses 193-194:

نَزَلَ بِهِ الرُّوحُ الْأَمِينُ
عَلَى قَلْبِكَ لِتَكُونَ مِنَ الْمُنذِرِينَ

Verily, from the Lord of the worlds has this Book come down upon your heart through the Faithful Spirit (Gabriel), that you may become one of the Warners. (26: 193-194)

And in Surah Al-Baqarah, verse 97:

قُلْ مَنْ كَانَ عَدُوًّا لِجِبْرِيلَ فَإِنَّهُ نَزَّلَهُ عَلَى قَلْبِكَ بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ مُصَدِّقًا لِمَا
بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ وَهُدًى وَبُشْرَى لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ

Say to them, "Whoever is enemy to Gabriel, [should understand that] he has, by Allah's command, revealed to your heart the Qur'an which confirms what was revealed before it, and brings Guidance and glad tidings to the Believers. (2:97)

- v. Recording the deeds of mankind:
Al-Infitar, verses 10-12:

وَإِنَّ عَلَيْكُمْ لَحَافِظِينَ
كِرَامًا كَاتِبِينَ
يَعْلَمُونَ مَا تَفْعَلُونَ

Verily, upon you are guardians – honored scribes – they know all that you do. (82:10 - 12)

- vi. Drawing the souls of those whose spans of life come to an end:
Al-Sajda, verse 11:

قُلْ يَتَوَفَّاكُم مَّلَكُ الْمَوْتِ الَّذِي وُكِّلَ بِكُمْ ثُمَّ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكُمْ تُرْجَعُونَ

Say: The Angel of Death appointed to take charge of all of you will make you die, and then you shall be brought back to your Lord. (32:11)

There are various other tasks mentioned in the Traditions of the Prophet صلى الله عليه و سلم that the angels are required to do. They, for example, spread their wings for anyone seeking knowledge, as token of Allah's pleasure with him; descend on gatherings organized for the remembrance of Allah; and protect mankind from harm by Allah's permission.

This article of faith will be jeopardized if a person:

- a. Denies the existence of angels, or
- b. Claims daughterhood of Allah for the angels, or
- c. Reviles (abuses/criticizes) angels in any manner whatsoever or makes fun of their powers or ridicules their composition or chemistry.

3- Belief in Books of Allah

The third article of Faith is belief in the Divine Books, that is, in the teachings and ordinances sent down by Allah to His Prophets and Messengers in order to lead mankind forth from darkness to light. Allah says in Surah Ibrahim, verse 1:

الر كِتَابٌ أَنْزَلْنَاهُ إِلَيْكَ لِتُخْرِجَ النَّاسَ مِنَ الظُّلُمَاتِ إِلَى النُّورِ بِإِذْنِ رَبِّهِمْ إِلَى صِرَاطٍ الْعَزِيزِ الْحَمِيدِ

A Book We have sent down to you in order that you may lead mankind out of darkness into light by the leave of their Lord – to the path of the Mighty, the Praised One. (14:1)

The Books Sent By Allah:

Of the many Heavenly books sent down by Allah we only know about the following, on sound authority:

1. The Scripture of Ibrahim عليه السلام : a collection of words of wisdom and commands. The Quran speaks of it as follows in Surah Al-Najm, verses 36 – 41):

أَمْ لَمْ يُنَبِّأْ بِمَا فِي صُحُفِ مُوسَى
وَإِبْرَاهِيمَ الَّذِي وَفَّى

أَلَا تَزِرُ وَازِرَةٌ وِزْرَ أُخْرَىٰ
وَأَنْ لَّيْسَ لِلْإِنْسَانِ إِلَّا مَا سَعَىٰ
وَأَنَّ سَعْيَهُ سَوْفَ يُرَىٰ
ثُمَّ يُجْزَاهُ الْجَزَاءَ الْأَوْفَىٰ

Has he (the unbeliever) not been told of what was in the Book of Musa and that of Ibrahim who fulfilled his trust: that no soul that carries a burden shall bear another's load and that each person only receives that for which he strives and (that the nature of) his endeavors will be shown (to him) and that he shall be requited for it in full? (53: 36 – 41)

The Quran also says, in Surah Al-A'la, verses 14 – 19:

قَدْ أَفْلَحَ مَنْ تَزَكَّىٰ
وَذَكَرَ اسْمَ رَبِّهِ فَصَلَّىٰ
بَلْ تُؤْثِرُونَ الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا
وَالْآخِرَةَ خَيْرٌ وَأَبْقَىٰ
إِنَّ هَذَا لَفِي الصُّحُفِ الْأُولَىٰ

صُحُفِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَمُوسَى

Those will surely prosper who purify themselves, who remember the name of their Lord and pray to Him. Yet you (mankind) prefer the worldly life, although the Hereafter is better and ever-lasting. Verily, all this was in the earlier Scriptures; the Scriptures of Ibrahim and Musa. (87:14 – 19)

2. The Psalms of Prophet Dawood عليه السلام : These were revealed by Allah to Prophet Dawood عليه السلام . The Quran, however, gives no details of their contents. It, nevertheless, does affirm, as follows in Surah Al-Isra, verse 55:

... وَأَتَيْنَا دَاوُودَ زَبُورًا

... To Dawood We gave the Zabur (the Psalms). (17:55)

3. The Taurat (Torah) revealed to Prophet Musa عليه السلام : The Quran says, in Surah Ali-Imran, verse 3:

... وَأَنْزَلَ التَّوْرَةَ وَالْإِنْجِيلَ

... And He sent down the Torah and the Gospel (Taurat and Injil). (3:3)

Moreover, the Quran describes the Torah as Furqan (the Criterion – a standard of judgment between right and wrong). It states in Surah Al-Anbiya, verse 48:

وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَا مُوسَىٰ وَهَارُونَ الْفُرْقَانَ وَضِيَاءً وَذِكْرًا لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ

We gave Musa and Harun (Aaron) the Criterion, and gave them a Light and a Reminder for the pious. (21:48)

The Taurat contained the true faith and the law given to Prophet Musa عليه السلام . It commanded justice in everything and invited all people to repentance. It also contained the tiding of the advent of the Final Prophet Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم .

It must, however, be mentioned that the original Taurat given to Prophet Musa عليه السلام was changed by the scribes and Doctors of Religion. They brought it down to a level where they would retain what they liked and cancel what they didn't like. The Quran states, in Surah Al-Nisa, verse 46:

مِنَ الَّذِينَ هَادُوا يُحَرِّفُونَ الْكَلِمَ عَن مَّوَاضِعِهِ ...

Among the Jews are those who displace words from their places... (4:46)

Consequently, the Taurat has lost its veracity, and what was once a Holy Book of several long chapters has been reduced to a mere

corrupt version. As for the original Taurat, all the good in it is included in the Holy Quran which both confirms and protects all the true teachings of the former Holy Books.

4. The Injil (Gospel) given to Prophet Isa (Jesus) عليه السلام : It was also a Book sent down from Heaven confirming the earlier Scripture, i.e. the Taurat and giving the glad tidings of the coming Prophet Muhammad صلى الله عليه و سلم : The Quran says in Surah Al-Ma'idah, verse 46):

وَقَفَّيْنَا عَلَىٰ آثَارِهِم بِعِيسَى ابْنِ مَرْيَمَ مُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ مِنَ التَّوْرَةِ
وَأَتَيْنَاهُ الْإِنجِيلَ فِيهِ هُدًى وَنُورٌ وَمُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ مِنَ التَّوْرَةِ
وَهُدًى وَمَوْعِظَةً لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ

After those Prophets We sent forth 'Isa, the son of Maryam, confirming the Taurat already revealed, and gave him the Injil in which there is guidance and light... (5:46)

And in Surah Al-Saff, verse 6 Allah says:

وَإِذْ قَالَ عِيسَى ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ يَا بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ إِنِّي رَسُولُ اللَّهِ إِلَيْكُمْ مُصَدِّقًا
لِّمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيَّ مِنَ التَّوْرَةِ وَمُبَشِّرًا بِرَسُولٍ يَأْتِي مِنْ بَعْدِي اسْمُهُ أَحْمَدُ
فَلَمَّا جَاءَهُمْ بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ قَالُوا هَذَا سِحْرٌ مُّبِينٌ

And (remember) when Isa, the son of Maryam, said: “O Children of Israel, I am Allah’s Messenger to you, confirming the Taurat already revealed and giving the tidings of a Messenger that will come after me whose name is Ahmad (the Praised one)... (61:6)

The Gospel (Injil) given to Prophet Isa عليه السلام contained belief in One God and commandments full of divine wisdom, such as the offering of ritual prayers, giving alms to the poor, inviting people to a higher standard of moral life and practicing mutual love and forgiveness in society. There was no such thing as Trinity or Deification of a human being or Crucifixion or the notion of Atonement. In fact, it was the Roman pagans who, being converted to Christianity, introduced some of their heretical beliefs into the body of Christian faith. Hence, the deviations in faith and hence the corruption in the Scripture. On this particular point the Quran states in Surah Al-Ma’idah, verse 14:

وَمِنَ الَّذِينَ قَالُوا إِنَّا نَصَارَى أَخَذْنَا مِيثَاقَهُمْ فَنَسُوا حَظًّا مِمَّا ذُكِّرُوا بِهِ
فَأَغْرَيْنَا بَيْنَهُمُ الْعَدَاوَةَ وَالْبَغْضَاءَ إِلَى يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ وَسَوْفَ يُنَبِّئُهُمُ اللَّهُ بِمَا
كَانُوا يَصْنَعُونَ

From those who said, ‘We are Christians,’ We also took a pledge but they too forgot much of what they were required to remember. (5:14)

There is no escape from admitting that the present Gospel (New Testament) is a corrupted book. There is very little of the original substance in it. Whatever was true of the Scripture was either burnt out or buried deep in the ground after the Roman Catholic church issued an edict authenticating only four versions of the Gospel, i.e. those according to Mark, Luke, Matthew, and John, and burning down all others. A Muslim, therefore, believes only in the unadulterated original texts and not in the latter-day interpolated or doctored versions of the Scriptures. As for the Quran, Allah Himself has guaranteed its intactness and guarded it against any corruption or interpolation.

Allah says in Surah Al-Hijr, verse 9:

إِنَّا نَحْنُ نَزَّلْنَا الذِّكْرَ وَإِنَّا لَهُ لَحَافِظُونَ

No doubt We have sent down the Admonition and surely We will guard it. (15:9)

5. The Holy Quran: It is the last of the Heavenly Books sent down by Allah. It was revealed to the last of His Prophets and Messengers Muhammad صلى الله عليه و سلم Ibn ‘Abdullah. Allah says in Surah Fussilat, verses 41 – 42:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِالذِّكْرِ لَمَّا جَاءَهُمْ وَإِنَّهُ لَكِتَابٌ عَزِيزٌ
لَا يَأْتِيهِ الْبَاطِلُ مِنْ بَيْنِ يَدَيْهِ وَلَا مِنْ خَلْفِهِ تَنْزِيلٌ مِنْ حَكِيمٍ حَمِيدٍ

This is a mighty Book. Falsehood cannot infiltrate into it either from before or from behind. It is a Revelation from One Who is All-Wise and Praiseworthy. (41:41-42)

The Quran contains all the truth included in the earlier Heavenly Scriptures, and Allah has sent down in it religio-legal laws that are good for all times and climes – on all matters, for example, the essentials of faith, the religious observances, and matters concerning our behaviors and dealings in daily life. The Quran comprises 6236 verses spread over 114 chapters. Allah not only sent down the word but also revealed the meaning thereof as well as the order of the chapters and the verses along with the manner and mode of their recitation. It was preserved in the Prophet's bosom who, in turn, dictated the revelations to the scribes from among his Companions, as and when they were received. The believers, on their part, committed the verses to memory or wrote them on scrolls, each generation passing on the trust to the next until they reached us through an unbroken chain of memorizers as well as through the earliest extant codices and printed versions. A believer is required to translate all the dictates of the Holy Book into his life, exert his mental energies to get at its meaning, try to recite it as best as he can and model his life and conduct after it. The Prophet صلى الله عليه و سلم has declared the faithful adherence to the teachings of the Quran as a sure protection against all straying from the right Path or error. The Prophet صلى الله عليه و سلم said:

I am leaving behind Allah's Book and my Sunnah. You will never be astray, after me, as long as you hold fast to these two. (Reported by Sahih Muslim)

One's faith in the Books of Allah will be jeopardized if he/she:

- a. Denies the very fact of Heavenly Books having been sent down by Allah to His Messengers (Blessings and Peace of Allah be upon all of them).

Believes the present versions of the earlier Scriptures - such as the books of the Bible - to be sacrosanct, uncorrupted, and untampered with.

- b. Denies the veracity of the Quranic text or any part of it.
- c. Claims that the Quran is not the Word of God but that of the Prophet himself, or that it is just a combination of the Torah and the Gospel.
- d. Suggests that the Quran collected in the codex is not whole and claims any purported additional material to have been once part of the Quran.
- e. Believes in some parts of the Quran and denies others, or dubs it as unworkable and out of turn with the demands of modern life.
- f. Denies the inimitable or miraculous nature of the Quran and avers that it is within the competence of mankind to produce a book like it.

Special points about the Holy Quran that make it distinct:

- Final Divine Revelation
- Preserved by Allah
- Not limited to a nation but universal – sufficient for all places and times

- The Holy Quran corrects the wrong things added to the previous revelations. For example, Christians added shirk (polytheism) to their book and made Isa عليه السلام the son of God but in the Holy Quran Allah said: ... قل هو الله أحد... (Surah 112) which gives the Truth about Allah's unique qualities of Absolute Oneness. Also Isa عليه السلام's truth is declared in the Holy Quran that he was only a Messenger and he and his mother were human beings – so they used to eat food.
- The content of the other Books is now a mixture of material taken from the Holy Books, History, comments of scribes and biographies of people. But the Quran is purely the statement of Allah. It has nothing from Hadith or any words of the Sahaba (Companions).
- The Holy Quran is a Miraculous Book. It is a miracle in its style, preservation, and knowledge. Today it is a challenge to the most modern scientist as it was (and still is) a literary challenge to Arab writers.

4- Belief in Messengers of Allah

Anyone having faith in the Merciful God must also believe in all the Messengers sent by Him for the guidance of mankind, without discrimination. The Quran states in Surah Al-Baqarah, verse 285:

أَمَّنَ الرَّسُولُ بِمَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْهِ مِنْ رَبِّهِ وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ كُلٌّ آمَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَمَلَائِكَتِهِ وَكُتُبِهِ
وَرُسُلِهِ لَا نُفَرِّقُ بَيْنَ أَحَدٍ مِنْ رُسُلِهِ وَقَالُوا سَمِعْنَا وَأَطَعْنَا غُفْرَانَكَ رَبَّنَا وَإِلَيْكَ
الْمَصِيرُ

The Messenger has believed in what was revealed to him from his Lord, and [so have] the believers. All of them have believed in Allah and His angels and His books and His messengers, [saying], **"We make no distinction between any of His messengers."** And they say, "We hear and we obey. [We seek] Your forgiveness, our Lord, and to You is the [final] destination."

(2: 285)

It means that a person cannot believe in some and disbelieve in other Messengers and still remain a Muslim. Similarly, his belief in Allah, the Beneficent, is not complete if at the same time he does not believe in the Messengers sent down by Him.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَكْفُرُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَرُسُلِهِ وَيُرِيدُونَ أَنْ يُفَرِّقُوا بَيْنَ اللَّهِ وَرُسُلِهِ وَيَقُولُونَ
نُؤْمِنُ بِبَعْضٍ وَنَكْفُرُ بِبَعْضٍ وَيُرِيدُونَ أَنْ يَتَّخِذُوا بَيْنَ ذَلِكَ سَبِيلًا

أُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْكَافِرُونَ حَقًّا وَأَعْتَدْنَا لِلْكَافِرِينَ عَذَابًا مُهِينًا

Those who deny Allah and His Messengers, and those who draw a line between Allah and His Messengers, saying: “We believe in some but deny others”, thus seeking a way in between; these indeed are the unbelievers.
(4 : 150 – 151)

Allah in His infinite wisdom has chosen to send down Messengers to each and every people to guide them to the right path:

إِنَّا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ بِالْحَقِّ بَشِيرًا وَنَذِيرًا وَإِنْ مِنْ أُمَّةٍ إِلَّا خَلَا فِيهَا نَذِيرٌ

Indeed, We have sent you with the truth as a bringer of good tidings and a warner. And there was no nation but that there had passed within it a warner.
(35: 24)

Purpose of Sending Messengers:

The purpose behind sending down the Apostles is that the people are left with no excuses for going astray on the Day of Judgment:

رُسُلًا مُبَشِّرِينَ وَمُنذِرِينَ لِئَلَّا يَكُونَ لِلنَّاسِ عَلَى اللَّهِ حُجَّةٌ بَعْدَ الرُّسُلِ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَزِيزًا حَكِيمًا

[We sent] Messengers as bringers of good tidings and warners so that mankind will have no argument against Allah after the Messengers. And ever is Allah Exalted in Might and Wise. (4 :165)

It is for this reason that we have been given no count of exact number of the Messengers raised by Allah. Even to His last Prophet, Allah recounted the names of some and withheld from him the names of other Prophets. The Quran, accordingly, makes mention of just twenty-five Prophets and Messengers, namely, Adam, Nuh (Noah), Hud, Salih, Shu'ayb, Lut (Lot), Ibrahim (Abraham), Isma'il (Ishmael), Ishaq (Issac), Ya'qub (Jacob), Yusuf (Joseph), Musa (Moses), Harun (Aaron), Dawud (David), Sulaiman (Solomon), Al-Yasa (Elisha), Dhul-Kifl, Zakariyya (Zacharias), Yahya (John), Ayyub (Job), Yunus (Jonah), Ilyas (Elias), Idris (Enoch), 'Isa Ibn Maryam (Jesus the son of Mary), and the Seal of all Prophets Muhammad Ibn Abdullah (on them all be peace and blessings of Allah). Of these Prophets, five have been termed as "Apostles of inflexible purpose," namely, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad (Allah's blessings and peace be on all of them).

Allah has chosen these Prophets from among men like us; they eat, drink, sleep, and marry. They are not different in their human needs. What distinguishes them from others is their being chosen by God for the bestowing of His revealed message. Allah says in Surah Al-Kahf, verse 110:

قُلْ إِنَّمَا أَنَا بَشَرٌ مِّثْلُكُمْ يُوحَىٰ إِلَيَّ أَنَّمَا إِلَهُكُمُ إِلَهُ وَاحِدٌ فَمَنْ كَانَ يَرْجُوا لِقَاءَ رَبِّهِ فَلْيَعْمَلْ عَمَلًا صَالِحًا وَلَا يُشْرِكْ بِعِبَادَةِ رَبِّهِ أَحَدًا

Say (O Muhammad): I am but a human being like all of you (but) I have been given the Revelation ...

(18: 110)

These Prophets are not only models of the highest moral virtues, such as truthfulness, honesty, wisdom, immunity from sin, and knowledge

bestowed by Allah, but are also commissioned to carry Allah's Message to His Servants, the human beings. They have a four-fold mission, as cited in the following verse:

فَهَزَمُوهُمْ بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ وَقَتَلَ دَاوُودُ جَالُوتَ وَآتَاهُ اللَّهُ الْمُلْكَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَعَلَّمَهُ مِمَّا يَشَاءُ وَلَوْلَا دَفْعُ اللَّهِ النَّاسَ بَعْضَهُمْ بِبَعْضٍ لَفَسَدَتِ الْأَرْضُ وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ ذُو فَضْلٍ عَلَى الْعَالَمِينَ

Just as We have sent among you a messenger from yourselves reciting to you Our verses and purifying you and teaching you the Book and wisdom and teaching you that which you did not know.

(2: 151)

Thus, the duties entrusted to the Messengers were:

- a. Recitation of Allah's Revelations and conveyance of His Messages.
- b. Instructing people in the principles of faith expressed in the Heavenly Books.
- c. Teaching people wisdom and the use of intellect as well as the principles of good behavior.
- d. Purifying the innerselves and directing the hearts toward piety and virtue such as would please Allah.

As evidence of their truthfulness and as proof of the genuineness of their claim to Prophethood, Allah has always armed His beloved Prophets with miracles that defy all natural laws and surpass all premises of ordinary logic.

It must, however, be recognized that in the essentials of faith, all the Prophets are one. There is complete unanimity among them as far as the basic requirement of inviting people to (i) belief in Allah, (ii) His Angels, (iii) His Books, (iv) His Messengers, (v) the Last Day, and (vi) the Divine Destiny – the good and the evil thereof – is concerned.

In matters of detailed laws and ordinances, however, they could differ with each other, especially if the ministry of a Messenger was specific to his people and age. As for the Last Prophet Muhammad صلى الله عليه و سلم , his Shari'ah (religio-legal code) has superseded all previous ones that were not in tune with the changing times and climes. His ministry is, therefore, as relevant and as comprehensive today as it was yesterday and will continue to be so for all times to come.

Hence, it is that every Prophet of Allah has affirmed his faith in all the Prophets before him and given tidings of those to follow. Each Prophet had also invariably urged upon his followers to believe in the Last Prophet and follow the path of Islam charted out by him, should they be witnesses to his advent at any time in the future.

Ali-Imran, verse 81:

وَإِذْ أَخَذَ اللَّهُ مِيثَاقَ النَّبِيِّينَ لَمَا آتَيْتُكُمْ مِنْ كِتَابٍ وَحِكْمَةٍ ثُمَّ جَاءَكُمْ رَسُولٌ مُصَدِّقٌ لِمَا مَعَكُمْ لَتُؤْمِنُنَّ بِهِ وَلَتَنْصُرُنَّهُ قَالَ أَأَقْرَرْتُمْ وَأَخَذْتُمْ عَلَىٰ ذَٰلِكُمْ إِصْرِي قَالُوا أَقْرَرْنَا قَالَ فَاشْهَدُوا وَأَنَا مَعَكُمْ مِنَ الشَّاهِدِينَ

And remember when Allah took the solemn pledge...

(3: 81)

The final Messenger of Allah Muhammad (Peace be upon him) has also acknowledged the contribution made by the Prophets before him and said:

My likeness with the Prophets that have gone before me is as the likeness of a man who built a house and built it beautifully and well, except for a missing brick in a corner. People go round and round the house, admire it and say, “Why is there no brick in place here?” I am that brick and I am the last of the Prophets. (Reported by Muslim)

This hadith asserts that Prophet Muhammad صلى الله عليه و سلم is the last and final Prophet and Messenger of Allah and that there will be no other Messenger /Prophet after him.

It must be emphasized here once again that belief in all the Prophets of Allah is a religious imperative in Islam, conceding of course at the same time that some of them rank higher than others in the estimation of Allah. The Quran states in Surah Al-Baqarah, verse 253:

تِلْكَ الرُّسُلُ فَضَّلْنَا بَعْضَهُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ مِنْهُمْ مَنْ كَلَّمَ اللَّهُ وَرَفَعَ بَعْضَهُمْ
دَرَجَاتٍ وَآتَيْنَا عِيسَى ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ الْبَيِّنَاتِ وَأَيَّدْنَاهُ بِرُوحِ الْقُدُسِ وَلَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ
مَا اقْتَتَلَ الَّذِينَ مِنْ بَعْدِهِمْ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَتْهُمْ الْبَيِّنَاتُ وَلَكِنْ اخْتَلَفُوا
فَمِنْهُمْ مَنْ آمَنَ وَمِنْهُمْ مَنْ كَفَرَ وَلَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ مَا اقْتَتَلُوا وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ يَفْعَلُ مَا
يُرِيدُ

Those messengers - some of them We caused to excel others. Among them were those to whom Allah spoke, and He raised some of them in degree...

(2: 253)

This article of Faith (Belief in the Messengers of Allah) will, however, be jeopardized if a person:

- i. Denies the Prophethood of even one of the Prophets mentioned in the Quran.
- ii. Ascribes even one of the attributes of Divinity or the status of sonhood of God to any one of the Prophets and Messengers.
- iii. Imputes falsehood, dishonesty or other acts of immorality to any one of the Prophets of Allah.
- iv. Denies the finality of Prophethood for Muhammad (Peace be upon him), whether overtly or covertly.
- v. Invents falsehood on the Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) knowingly and willingly.

5- Belief in the Last Day

Belief in the Last Day is a necessary article of faith as it is the basic premise of the religion of Islam that Allah has not created man in jest. Man is not there just to eat his bread, live a certain length of time, and then lie dead a corpse to be buried under mountains of dust.

The Quran states in Surah Al-Mominoon, verse 115:

أَفَحَسِبْتُمْ أَنَّمَا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ عَبَثًا وَأَنَّكُمْ إِلَيْنَا لَا تُرْجَعُونَ

[/ "Then did you think that We created you uselessly and that to Us you would not be returned?" (23:115)

A Muslim believes that death is nothing but man's transition from one mode of living to another. The likeness of a dying man is the likeness of a foetus emerging forth from the narrow confines of the mother's womb into a wide, open world on the face of the earth. A Muslim also believes that Allah will resurrect man after he is dead and buried in the earth just as He quickens the dead earth by bringing forth plants and vegetables out of it. Allah says in His Book, in Surah Yasin, verse 79:

قُلْ يُحْيِيهَا الَّذِي أَنشَأَهَا أَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ وَهُوَ بِكُلِّ خَلْقٍ عَلِيمٌ

[/Say: He Who created them at first will bring them to life again. (36:79)

The resurrected man shall then be called to account by Allah and be requited for his good or bad deeds. The Quran states, in Surah Zilzaal, verses 7 – 8:

فَمَنْ يَعْمَلْ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ خَيْرًا يَرَهُ

وَمَنْ يَعْمَلْ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ شَرًّا يَرَهُ

So whoever does an atom's weight of good will see it,

And whoever does an atom's weight of evil will see it. (99: 7-8)

The believers among them shall then be lodged by Allah in the comforts of Paradise while the disbelievers shall be thrown into Hellfire. As for the sinners or wrongdoers from amongst the believers, their fate will be decided by God one way or the other, according to His Pleasure. He may pardon them if He wills and punish them if He chooses for a certain period of time in proportion to their crimes and sins, then relent and allow them as well into the gardens of Paradise.

The Quran states in Surah Al-Baqarah, Verse 284:

لِلَّهِ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَإِنْ تُبْدُوا مَا فِي أَنْفُسِكُمْ أَوْ تُخْفُوهُ
يُحَاسِبْكُمْ بِهِ اللَّهُ فَيَغْفِرُ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ وَيُعَذِّبُ مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَاللَّهُ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ

قَدِيرٌ

To Allah belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth. Whether you show what is within yourselves or conceal it, Allah will bring you to account for it. Then He will forgive whom He wills and punish whom He wills, and Allah is over all things competent. (2: 284)

Names of the Last Day

The names given to the Last Day in the Quran are many: Al-Haaqqah (the Inevitable), Al-Qariah (The Calamity), Al-Ghashiyah (The Overwhelming), At-Tammat Al-Kubra (The Great Disaster), As-Saakhah (The Deafening Sound), Al-'Azifah (The Approaching Day), Yawm-Ad-deen (The Day of Judgment), Yawm At-Taghabun (The Day of Loss and Gain), Yawm At-Talaq (The Day of Meeting), Yawm Al-Fatih (The Day of Triumph), Yawm Al-Hisaab (The Day of Reckoning), Yawm Al-Ba'th (the Day of Resurrection), As-Sa'ah (The Hour), Yawm Al-Qiyamah (The Day of the Rising of the Dead), Yawm Al-Hashr (The Day of Regret), Yawm Al-Khuruuj (The Day of Coming Forth), Yawm Al-Waqt Al-Ma'lum (The Day of the Appointed Hour).

Time of the Hour

As for the exact hour of its happening, Allah has kept the knowledge to Himself and has not revealed it to any one of His creation. It is stated in Surah Al-Araf, verse 187:

يَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ السَّاعَةِ أَيَّانَ مُرْسَاهَا قُلْ إِنَّمَا عِلْمُهَا عِنْدَ رَبِّي لَا يُجَلِّيهَا لِوَقْتِهَا
إِلَّا هُوَ ثَقُلَتْ فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ لَا تَأْتِيكُمُ إِلَّا بَغْتَةً يَسْأَلُونَكَ كَأَنَّكَ
حَفِيٌّ عَنْهَا قُلْ إِنَّمَا عِلْمُهَا عِنْدَ اللَّهِ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ

*They ask you, [O Muhammad], about the Hour: when is its arrival?
Say, "Its knowledge is only with my Lord. None will reveal its time
except Him. It lays heavily upon the heavens and the earth. It will not*

come upon you except unexpectedly." They ask you as if you are familiar with it. Say, "Its knowledge is only with Allah, but most of the people do not know." [i] (7:187)

In a hadith it is stated that the Angel Jibreel عليه السلام said to the Messenger صلى الله عليه وسلم : "Tell me about the Hour." The Prophet replied: **"The one questioned about it knows no better than the questioner."** (Reported in Sahih Muslim).

Allah, in fact, has kept the knowledge of the impending hour from mankind so that mankind always tries to keep himself in a state of readiness, obey His ordinances from moment to moment and avoid doing things not allowed by Him.

Allah has, nevertheless, appointed certain signs for the approach of the Hour. The most important of them being: the cleaving apart of the sky, the scattering around of the planets, the folding up of the sun, the fading of the stars, and splitting of the earth, [which are all actual happenings of the disaster] and the rising of the sun from the west [which is one of the signs of the Hour].

The Quran states in Surah Ibrahim, verse 48:

يَوْمَ تُبَدَّلُ الْأَرْضُ غَيْرَ الْأَرْضِ وَالسَّمَوَاتُ وَبَرَزُوا لِلَّهِ الْوَاحِدِ الْقَهَّارِ

[It will be] on the Day the earth will be replaced by another earth, and the heavens [as well], and all creatures will come out before Allah, the One, the Prevailing. (14:48)

Belief in the Last Day makes man aware of the esteem God holds him in and creates in him the assurance that Divine judgment as between man and man will surely be set up. In fact there are always many scores that remain unsettled on the earth. How many oppressors here die without retribution being exacted in favor of the oppressed! How many thieves get away without the stolen money or property being restored to the rightful owner! And how many persons run the full course of their lives without clearing their debts or fulfilling their trusts!

It is only when the Day of Reckoning comes that each person will be called upon to render an account of all his / her deeds and misdeeds. On that day, justice will be imparted to one and all. The oppressed shall then get his relief from the oppressor and all outstanding scores of trusts and responsibilities settled to the satisfaction of each soul. The Quran states in Surah Al-Nahl, verse 38 – 39:

وَأَقْسَمُوا بِاللَّهِ جَهْدَ أَيْمَانِهِمْ لَا يَبْعَثُ اللَّهُ مَنْ يَمُوتُ بَلَىٰ وَعْدًا عَلَيْهِ حَقًّا
وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ

لِيُبَيِّنَ لَهُمُ الَّذِي يُخْتَلِفُونَ فِيهِ وَلِيَعْلَمَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا أَنَّهُمْ كَانُوا كَاذِبِينَ

And they swear by Allah their strongest oaths [that] Allah will not resurrect one who dies. But yes - [it is] a true promise [binding] upon Him, but most of the people do not know.

[It is] so He will make clear to them [the truth of] that wherein they differ and so those who have disbelieved may know that they were liars. (16: 38 – 39)

Obviously those who deny the occurrence of the Last Day and the Resurrection persuade themselves to believe that they will never be questioned about or taken into task for the wrongs they committed or the rights of others they usurped or the duties and obligations toward themselves and their Creator that they neglected. They almost believe as the common saying goes: Earth swallows what the mothers deliver.

Allah has said in the Quran, Surah Al-Qiyamah, verses 3 – 5:

أَيَحْسَبُ الْإِنْسَانُ أَلَّنْ نَجْمَعُ عِظَامَهُ

بَلَىٰ قَادِرِينَ عَلَىٰ أَنْ نُسَوِّيَ بَنَانَهُ

بَلْ يُرِيدُ الْإِنْسَانُ لِيَفْجُرَ أَمَامَهُ

*Does man think that We will not assemble his bones?
Yes. [We are] Able [even] to proportion his fingertips.
But man desires to continue in sin. (75: 3 – 5)*

Belief in the Day of Resurrection is an important part of faith:

The faith that one professes has no meaning or consequence and is not acceptable if they do not also believe in Resurrection taking place on the Last Day:

It is stated in the Quran, Surah Al-Mujadilah, Verse 6:

يَوْمَ يَبْعَثُهُمُ اللَّهُ جَمِيعًا فَيُنَبِّئُهُم بِمَا عَمِلُوا أَحْصَاهُ اللَّهُ وَنَسُوهُ وَاللَّهُ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ شَهِيدٌ

On the Day when Allah will resurrect them all and inform them of what they did - Allah had kept count of it, while they forgot it; and Allah is, over all things, Witness. (58: 6)

And in Surah Al-Nur, Verses 24 – 25 it is stated:

يَوْمَ تَشْهَدُ عَلَيْهِمْ أَلْسِنُهُمْ وَأَيْدِيهِمْ وَأَرْجُلُهُمْ بِمَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ
يَوْمَئِذٍ يُوفِّيهِمُ اللَّهُ دِينَهُمُ الْحَقَّ وَيَعْلَمُونَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ الْحَقُّ الْمُبِينُ

On a Day when their tongues, their hands and their feet will bear witness against them as to what they used to do.

*That Day, Allah will pay them in full their deserved recompense, and they will know that it is Allah who is the perfect in justice.
(24: 24 – 25)*

This Article of Faith – Belief in the Last Day – will be jeopardized if a person:

1. Denies the occurrence of the Day, or his Resurrection or the Reckoning, or the laying of the Scales, or the setting up of the Bridge across the infernal Fire, or the existence of Heaven and Hell, or any other phenomenon, seen or unseen, expressly mentioned in the Glorious Quran.
2. Denies God's attribute of Justice in adjudicating mankind's affairs and decreeing Heaven or Hell for him.

6- Belief in Divine Destiny, The Good and The Evil Thereof

To have faith in the Divine Destiny means to believe that Allah (Glory be to Him) in His infinite wisdom willed that there be in the universe abiding laws, enduring principles and a foolproof system wherein each effect is linked to a cause. Whatever happens anywhere in the universe is within the foreknowledge of Allah. This Divine knowledge should not, however be supposed to dictate the actions of humans who is free to do what they like and as they likes, for God has created them and bestowed upon them reason and intellect to ponder and reflect. God has also given them freedom to choose and decide for themselves. They have therefore been made accountable for doing things that fall within their powers and exempted them from answering for things and happenings beyond their control. Thus, anyone believing in the existence of a Divine design in his/her Destiny shall discern the Creator's prudent plan in the entire universe whose true dimensions humankind may never be able to know. Such a believing person will, therefore, never indulge in self-pity or despair in misfortune nor will they gloat over their good fortune or withhold its fruits from others.

On the other hand, those among mankind who have no true faith in the Divine nature of Destiny only worship God with any eye on worldly benefits. So, if they fall on evil days, they begin to lament and cry and raise heavens and earth and stop worshipping their Creator, the Almighty God. The Quran states in Surah Al-Hajj, verse 11:

وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَنْ يَعْبُدُ اللَّهَ عَلَى حَرْفٍ فَإِنْ أَصَابَهُ خَيْرٌ اطْمَأَنَّ بِهِ وَإِنْ أَصَابَتْهُ
فِتْنَةٌ انْقَلَبَ عَلَى وَجْهِهِ خَسِرَ الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةَ ذَلِكَ هُوَ الْخُسْرَانُ الْمُبِينُ

And of the people is he who worships Allah on an edge. If he is touched by good, he is reassured by it; but if he is struck by trial, he turns on his face [to the other direction]. He has lost [this] world and the Hereafter. That is what is the manifest loss. (22:11)

A believer who has faith in Divine Destiny is not overwhelmed by despair in a misfortune nor gloats or exults over his achievements and successes, for he knows only too well that:

مَا أَصَابَ مِنْ مُصِيبَةٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا فِي أَنْفُسِكُمْ إِلَّا فِي كِتَابٍ مِنْ قَبْلِ أَنْ
نَبْرَأَهَا إِنَّ ذَلِكَ عَلَى اللَّهِ يَسِيرٌ

لِكَيْ لَا تَأْسَوْا عَلَى مَا فَاتَكُمْ وَلَا تَفْرَحُوا بِمَا آتَاكُمْ وَاللَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ كُلَّ مُخْتَالٍ
فَخُورٍ

No disaster strikes upon the earth or among yourselves except that it is in a register before We bring it into being - indeed that, for Allah, is easy -

In order that you not despair over what has eluded you and not exult [in pride] over what He has given you. And Allah does not like everyone self-deluded and boastful - (57: 22-23)

Faith in the Destiny in this particular sense brings into being a levelheaded, balanced person who uses his intellect and free will judiciously, make all the necessary efforts to achieve an objective and seek the result from Allah. He knows and understands the laws governing mankind's fate or destiny and acts appropriately. Sickness of body or the outbreak of an epidemic to him is a part of Divine decree and the measures taken to fight that sickness or epidemic are also the dictates of that decree. In other words, a believer in the Divine Decree or Destiny will escape from Allah's decree of sickness / epidemic to His decree of treatment and recovery. Hunger is a divine decree and one's striving to earn bread and subdue hunger too is a part of that decree. Thus, a believer in the Divine nature of Destiny fights the incidence of hunger decreed by Allah by taking necessary measures to satisfy that hunger, also under the ordinances of Allah.

There is no sanction in Islam for shirking work or slackening one's effort under the plea of pre-destination. Nor is there any justification for suspending one's better reason and taking unbridled freedom or liberty in behavior and conduct under mistaken notion of free-will.

Viewed from this point of view, a believer sees an element of good in anything and everything, favorable or unfavorable, that happens to him in life, as so succinctly expressed by the Holy Prophet (Allah's peace be upon him):

Strange are the ways of the faithful. There is good for him in every circumstance. And this phenomenon is particular to him and to no one else. If happiness comes to him, he gives his thanks to Allah which turns out to his good; but if a misfortune befalls him, he bears it with forbearance and patience which also turns out to his good. (Al-Bukhari)

It must be pointed out here that the terms “good” and “bad” used in the context of fate or destiny are relative, for what a person sees as good for himself may sometimes turn out to be bad for him, and vice versa. The Quran says in chapter Al-Baqarah:

عَسَىٰ أَنْ تَكْرَهُوا شَيْئًا وَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ وَعَسَىٰ أَنْ تُحِبُّوا شَيْئًا وَهُوَ شَرٌّ لَّكُمْ
وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ وَأَنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ

It may be that you hate a thing although it is good for you, and you love a thing although it is bad for you. Allah knows whereas you know not (2:216)

A man with a limited vision, however, sees evil in anything that conflicts with his own supposed interests and desires, even though there may be good in it for humanity at large. Similarly, he sees good in anything that satisfies his desires and ego, even though it be harmful and evil for the rest of the world.

It is clear from the preceding arguments or discussion that it is an essential part of a Muslim’s faith that he believe in the Divine Destiny, the good and the evil thereof and conduct his actions and behavior in accordance with that belief.

Faith in this essential article, with however be jeopardized if a person:

- i. Denies the divine nature of Destiny or believes it not to be an essential part of faith.
- ii. Ascribes injustice to Allah by posing a rhetorical question: could it be that the Creator creates His creatures and throws them into Hellfire? Or buys anything else to that effect.
- iii. Claims that he could not but have committed sins as it was predetermined by God, and therefore neither any blame devolves on him nor is he liable to be questioned about his deeds.

Note: From **Essentials of Islam** published by **Islamic Foundation for Education, Dubai**.