

Knowing Allah



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Who is Allah?

Who is God ?

Etymology of the Word

The term "Allah" the Almighty is originally an Arabic word, which was used by the pre-Islamic Arabs. They believed in Allah, the Almighty, the supreme God and the one and only God. Some of them worshiped other gods besides Him, while others were polytheists worshiping idols.

Allah's Existence and Attributes

Proper scientific reasoning can be agreed upon as the only way to reach the truth of Allah's existence and attributes by all people (including the believers and the atheists). Since every one agrees that every action has a doer and every thing happens for a reason, nothing can be an exception to that rule; nothing comes out of nowhere and nothing happens for no reason. Examples of that are countless and evident. The entire universe including the living or the inanimate, the static and the mobile have been created from nothing. Common sense and science confirm that if there was some one who had created the universe whether His name is Allah, the Creator, or the Originator, it would not change the fact that the whole universe gives enough evidence to the existence of the Creator.

Studying and following up the Creator's work and products (creatures) is the way to get to know His attributes. For instance, a book signifies the knowledge, experience, culture, style, mentality and the ability to achievement and analysis of its writer. The manufactures give a vivid image and a comprehensive idea of its manufacturer's attributes. If people used this scientific reasoning in their approach to the universe and its creatures, they would be able to see the attributes of the Creator, the beauty of seas, the balance of the universe and the system of its movement, all the knowledge man has reached, nature, the accuracy of cells and the wise reasons behind its details made by the Creator. All of them demonstrate the Creator's greatness, knowledge and wisdom.

Whether people agreed or not upon the wise reasons behind the existence of the universe or the pains and hardships in life, that would not change the re-

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sult, concluded by the scientific reasoning which confirms the existence of the Great Creator, the Almighty, the All-Knowing and the Wise who believers agree to call Allah, the Almighty.

Does God have limitations?

Where Did God Come From?

Both the Bible and the Quran tell us God has always existed and there never was a time He did not exist. As such, He is the Eternal, without beginning and without end. He is the only creator and sustainer of all that exists and nothing and no one exists alongside Him, nor does He have any partners. He tells us, He is not created, nor is He like His creation in anyway. He calls Himself by a number of names and three of them are:

The First – (Al-Awal)

The Last – (Al Akhir)

The Eternal and the One who is sought after by His creation, while He has no need from them at all. (As-Samad)

He is not a man and He has no progeny or offspring.

He is not what He creates nor is He compared to it.

He always has existed and He never was created, as He is not like His creation, nor similar to it, in any way.

The prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) explained the devil would come to a person and ask them questions about creation; "Who created this or that?" to which the reply would be; "Allah" until he would ask; "Who created Allah?" At this stage the prophet advised us to drop this train of thought. Obviously, God – the real God, must be eternal and not have to be created.

The Quran tells us:

Allah! La ilaha illa Huwa (There is no god to worship except Him), the Ever Living, the Sustainer and Protector of all that exists. He doesn't get tired and

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He doesn't sleep. Everything in the universe belongs to Him. Who then, could intercede between Him and his creatures without His Permission? He Knows everything about them and they have no knowledge except as He wills. His kursi (stool or chair) extends over the entire universe and He doesn't get tired of guarding and preserving it. He is Most High, the Most Great.

[This Verse is called Ayat-ul-Kursi.] [Noble Quran 2:255]

This verse truly presents the comprehensive representation of God in a way without trying to define Him by comparing Him to His creation, but rather as being the Absolute in all of His Attributes and Characteristics.

Does God know future?

Does God know everything that is going to happen? – Does He have absolute control on the outcome of everything? – If so, how is that fair for us? Where is our free will then?

Allah knows everything that will happen. The first thing that He created was the "pen" and He ordered the pen to write. The pen wrote until it had written everything that would happen. And then Allah began to create the universe. All of this was already known to Him before He created it. He does have absolute and total control at all times. There is nothing that happens except that He is in total control of it at all times.

..Allah accepts the repentance of whom He wills. Allah is All-Knowing, All-Wise.

[Noble Quran 9:15]

..Truly He! Only He, is the All-Knowing, the All-Wise.

[Noble Quran 12:100]

And Allah only, has Free Will, He Wills whatever He likes and it will always happen as He wills. We have something called, "Free choice." The difference

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is that what Allah "Wills" always happens and what we choose may or may not happen. We are not being judged on the outcome of things, we are being judged on our choices. This means that at the core of everything will always be our intentions. Whatever we intended, is what we will have the reward for. Each person will be judged according to what Allah gave them to work with, how they used it and what they intended to do with it.

As regards the actual "Judgment Day" – Allah tells us that everything we are doing is being recorded and not a single tiny thing escapes from this record. Even an atom's weight of good will be seen on the Day of Judgment and even a single atom's weight of evil will be seen too.

On That Day (of judgment) mankind will proceed in scattered groups and they will be shown their deeds.

So whoever does good equal to the weight of an atom, shall see it.

And whoever does evil equal to the weight of an atom, shall see it.
[Noble Quran 99:6-8]

The one who will bring the evidences against us will be ourselves. Our ears, tongue, eyes and all of our bodies will begin to testify against us in front of Allah on the Day of Judgment. None will be oppressed on that Day, none will be falsely accused.

He could have put everyone in their respective places from the very beginning, but the people would complain as to why they were thrown in Hell without being given a chance. This life is exactly that; a chance to prove to ourselves who we really are and what we would really do if we indeed had a free choice.

Allah Knows everything that will happen, but we don't. That is why the test is fair.

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Who is Allah? The way to know Allah

Introduction:

There are various ways through which man can familiarize himself with the surroundings, beings, natural and unnatural phenomena. Each one of these has certain way to realize it.

For example, when one wants to acquaint himself with a person he does not know, one may get closer to that person, show love and respect. There is even a formula of respect and reverence used by different languages to show respect in addressing people or one can introduce himself to that person either directly or indirectly and so on and so forth. However, the best way to know someone is to listen to him talking and it is the perfect method when it comes to knowing Allah.

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Allah the Almighty Himself answers this question in His saying,

Allah – there is no deity except Him, the Ever-Living, the Sustainer of [all] existence. Neither drowsiness overtakes Him nor sleep. To Him belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth. Who is it that can intercede with Him except by His permission? He knows what is [presently] before them and what will be after them, and they encompass not a thing of His knowledge except for what He wills. His Kursi extends over the heavens and the earth, and their preservation tires Him not. And He is the Most High, the Most Great. [Al-Baqarah: 255]

Allah Almighty introduces Himself in the above mentioned verse as follows:

– Allah – there is no deity except Him (Allahu la Ilah Ila Howa): Allah informs us that He is the One true god who deserves to be worshiped by all His creatures.

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-Ever-Living, the Sustainer of [all] existence (Al-Hay Al-Qayum): Allah is the Ever-Living, He is eternal while all his creatures are mortal. He is the Sustainer of all that exist who are in need of His help and support.

- Neither drowsiness overtakes Him nor sleep (La ta'khuzhu sinatun wa la naoum): it means that Allah is above imperfection, inattention or distraction. He is the Ever-watchful over everything and everyone and nothing can escape His knowledge. Allah is Perfect and Eternal He is never overtaken by drowsiness which is light sleep or even sleep.

- To Him belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth (Lahu ma fi as-samawati wa ma fi al-ard): it informs that all beings are His servants and all of them are under His Might and Dominance.

- Who is it that can intercede with Him except by His permission? (man tha allathi yashfa'u 'indahu illa bi ithnih): this verse shows Allah's greatness, Majesty and Gloriousness where none can intercede with Him without His permission.

- He knows what is [presently] before them and what will be after them (Ya'lam ma bayn aydihim wa ma khalfahum): it shows that Allah's knowledge encompasses everything.

- and they encompass not a thing of His knowledge except for what He wills (wa la yuhitun bi shay'in min ilmihi illa bima sha'): it means that none can know anything except for that which Allah the Almighty taught and revealed to him.

- His Kursi extends over the heavens and the earth (wa si'a kursiuhu as-samawt wa al-ard): it means that His dominance and throne encompasses everything.

- and their preservation tires Him not (wa la ya'uduhu hifzuhuma): it means that nothing in the heavens or earth or in between can over burden or bother Allah Who protects them all. Rather, it is so easy for Him since He is the Sustainer for all, the ever-Watchful, nothing in the world that exist escapes His knowledge, all things stand in humiliation and need before Him and He is Free of need, the Praiseworthy, He does what He wills and He is not questioned about what He does, but they will be questioned. He is the Omnipotent, The Suffient, ever-Watchful, The Exalted, the Greatest and there is no

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god deserves worship except Him.

– And He is the Most High, the Most Great (wa howa al-'Ali al-'Azeem): Allah is High above everything He is the Greatest.

This is the first thing we can introduce to our readers who wants to know Allah. We do not need to bring you evidence on His existence, praise Him in poems or anything about Him since Allah Almighty and the Greatest introduced Himself in His noble verse.

This verse is named "the verse of the Throne "Ayat al-Kursi" is the greatest verse of the noble Qur'an. One should ponder it, listen to Allah talking about Himself and try to go deeper in knowing Him.

Our next article tackles the same subject.

Searching for the truth_ Do not be upset!!

There are many people who couldn't know Allah easily since the way towards knowing Him is not that easy. The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him): "the way to paradise is surrounded by hardships."

Here, we will derive the example of a young Magus man who was responsible for sitting and keeping fire on for his Magus people.

The young man went out one day and met a group of Christians worshiping Allah in one of their monasteries. He wondered and had a feeling that they were right while he was not. Thereupon, he converted to their religion and was curious to know its source. Upon knowing that the people of this religion originally reside in Syria, he ceased the opportunity, left his homeland and went searching for them therein. He willingly worked as a servant to one of their priests and found him insincere; thereupon, he left him after his death. Then, he joined another priest who was on the right path and the young man followed his advice. After the death of that priest, the young man joined a third one who played a significant role in his life.

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The later advised the young man to follow the Prophet who will appear at that time, but in a different land and will be sent for different people. The young man went on his way searching for that Prophet, religion and god. He sold all his property to a group of traveling people in return for taking him to that land. They captured and enslaved him. It didn't take him long and finally he met Prophet Muhammad (pace and blessings be upon him) and he recognized him. The young man knew Allah.

This young man was Suleiman al-Farisi, the true searcher for truth, who crossed the desert from east to west searching for Allah, His Lord and he was a dutiful servant.

Dear honorable reader,

If you have not known Allah yet, follow the footsteps of Suleiman, try to search and do your best to know Him. It is really a great pleasure upon truly reaching and knowing Allah.

Knowing Allah through His creations

[1]Knowing Allah through His creations

The best thing through which one can know Allah is through His creations that He perfectly brought to existence and all the bounties He bestowed upon mankind—believing and unbelieving.

The noble Qur'an is the most evident witness on the greatness and will of Allah since it includes the news of all creations and unveils the facts that humans ignore.

Here, we will point out some of the miracles mentioned in the noble Qur'an that strongly prove the existence of Allah and His eternal encompassing knowledge:

– Scientists had many trials to discover the real components of iron since they discovered that the energy relating its molecules equals four times of that

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which exists in our solar system. Scientists wondered upon knowing this fact; however, scholars of Islam were familiar with it since they studied the saying of Allah:

And We sent down iron, wherein is great military might and benefits for the people, and so that Allah may make evident those who support Him and His messengers unseen. Indeed, Allah is Powerful and Exalted in Might. [Al-Hadeed: 25].

Thereupon, they knew through the word "we sent down" that iron was not among the minerals found on earth, rather it was sent down from heaven. The mineralogists in the modern time asserted that iron does not have the same properties of other minerals exist on earth.

- Exploring the deep seas, marine geologists discovered that all the details pertaining to the descriptions of the seas are stated in the Qur'anic verse in which Allah Almighty says:

Or [they are] like darkneses within an unfathomable sea which is covered by waves, upon which are waves, over which are clouds - darkneses, some of them upon others. When one puts out his hand [therein], he can hardly see it. And he to whom Allah has not granted light - for him there is no light. [Al-Noor: 40].

Professor Shridar, one of the greatest marine geologists in West Germany commented on the above verse saying: this is a fact which has been proved through building dozens of arsenals and taking pictures through satellites. These words can never be of humans.

Professor Dorgaro, a marine geologist, explained the scientific authenticity of the above verse saying: "man in the past could not dive more than 20 meters beneath the sea without the help of equipments. However, in the present, we use modern equipments to dive 200 meters beneath the deep sea where we find great darkness as it was perfectly described in the noble verse "unfathomable sea". Marine researches explained the meaning of the saying of Allah "darkneses, some of them upon others"; it is known that the rainbow colors

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are seven, including red, yellow, blue, green, orange...etc. when we go deeper towards the bottom of the sea, each of these colors disappear gradually and each leaves darkness. The red disappears, then the orange, yellow and finally blue at 200 meters deep. Each of these colors disappears leaving darkness until it reaches its highest degree at the depth of 200 meters. As for the saying of Allah "waves, upon which are waves", it was scientifically proved that the bottom and top of the seas are separated by numerous waves which are placed above each other. This is as if the bottom of the sea is bordered by waves which are invisible to us while that on its top are visible, so they are like waves upon waves as stated in the verse. That is why Professor Dorgaro asserted that these verses can never be of humans."

This is Allah!!

If you still do not know Him,

- Ponder over His signs and creations;
- Think of the heavens and how they are erected;
- How He stretched the earth beneath your feet;
- Think who controls your breath in ever inhale and exhale.
- He is Allah the One and the Ever-Sustainer.

[1] Excerpted from an article by Sheikh Mohamed Mutwali al-Sha'rawi titled "the material signs on the existence of Allah".

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What do Muslims believe about Allah

These are some of the basic guidelines Muslims follow in their knowledge of God:

1. Eliminate any anthropomorphism (human qualities) from their conception of Allah. His attributes are not like human attributes, despite similar labels or appellations.
2. Have unwavering faith in exactly what Allah and Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) described Allah to be, no more, no less.
3. Eradicate any hope or desire of learning or knowing the modality of His names and attributes.
4. Believe totally in all the names and attributes of Allah; one cannot believe in some and disbelieve the others.
5. One cannot accept the names of Allah without their associated attributes, i.e. one cannot say He is Al-Hayy - 'The Living' and then say that He is without life.
6. Similarity in names (or meanings) does not imply similarity in what is being described (referents). As a robotics arm differs from a human arm, so the "hand" of Allah is nothing like a human hand, His speech is nothing like human speech, etc.
7. Certain words are ambiguous or vague in their meanings, and thus may be susceptible to misinterpretation. Only those meanings that are in accordance with what is specified by Allah and His Prophet (peace be upon him) are acceptable.

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Allah– God

Islam is the complete submission and obedience to Allah (God).

The name Allah (God) in Islam never refers to Muhammad (pbuh), as many Christians may think; Allah is the personal name of God.

What do Muslims believe about Allah?

1. He is the one God, Who has no partner.
2. Nothing is like Him. He is the Creator, not created, nor a part of His creation.
3. He is All-Powerful, absolutely Just.
4. There is no other entity in the entire universe worthy of worship besides Him.
5. He is First, Last, and Everlasting; He was when nothing was, and will be when nothing else remains.
6. He is the All-Knowing, and All-Merciful, the Supreme, the Sovereign.
7. It is only He Who is capable of granting life to anything.
8. He sent His Messengers (peace be upon them) to guide all of mankind.
9. He sent Muhammad (pbuh) as the last Prophet and Messenger for all mankind.
10. His book is the Holy Qur'an, the only authentic revealed book in the world that has been kept without change.
11. Allah knows what is in our hearts.

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Belief (Iman) in Allah Almighty

Iman in Allah Almighty is the principle of faith:

Believing in Allah Almighty is the principle reason for which Allah created the heaven, earth, Paradise, Hellfire, the balance, the straight path and all mankind. Allah Almighty says in the Qur'an:

I created Jinn and mankind only to worship Me. [Al-Dhariyat: 56]

Knowing Allah Almighty and believing in Him requires admitting His Lordship (Rububiyyah), Worship (Uluhiyyah), Names and Attributes (Al-Assma' wa Al-Sifat) which are considered the basics of faith. Muslims must know all of these matters relating to Allah Almighty to have sound faith.

Following is a glimpse on such principles of faith:

What does Iman mean?

- Linguistic meaning: to believe.
- Technical meaning:

Believe in Allah verbally and by heart. Iman in Allah means the firm conviction that Allah Almighty is the Rabb (the Lord), Creator, Master, Cherisher of all things; and that He is the Ilah (diety) who is alone worthy of undivided worship and that He is distinguished by all the attributes of perfection and completeness and that He is above any faults or deficiencies.

The three areas of Tawhid (monotheism):

- The Tawhid of Lordship.
- The Tawhid of Worship.
- The Tawhid of Names and Attributes (al-Assma wa al-Sifat).

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Difference between faith [Iman] and Islam

Undoubtedly, there is a great difference between a believer and Muslim or Iman and Islam, in other words. Iman is both verbal and actions. Meaning, the heart and tongue confess with Iman while the heart and other sense do actions. Islam, on the other hand, means to submit oneself to Allah and obey His commands. Allah Almighty says,

The Bedouins say, "We have believed." Say, "You have not [yet] believed; but say [instead], 'We have submitted,' for faith has not yet entered your hearts. [Al-Hujurat: 14].

Based on this, scholars consider Iman as the inward deeds, while Islam is the outward actions. This is because Iman principally is the belief instilled in one's heart and Islam is to submit one's senses to it.

Therefore, the true Muslim is not reluctant in submitting himself in humiliation to Allah obeying His commands, hastening to fulfill the obligations of Islam, abandoning its prohibitions and believing that what Allah commanded us to do is in our best interest and what He prohibited entails evil.

· Here, it is worthy to mention that both Iman and Islam are frequently interchangeable. The Arch angel Jibril (peace be upon him) differentiated between Iman and Islam in the well-known hadith [tradition] where he asked the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him): "Oh Messenger of Allah! What is Iman? He replied: it is to believe in Allah, His Angels, Books, Messengers, the last Day, and destiny whether good or evil. And what is Islam? The Prophet replied: It is to testify that there is no god but Allah and that Muhammad is His Messenger, perform prayers, pay zakat [obligatory charity], fast the month of Ramadan and go for Hajj upon having the means."

In the above hadith, Iman is mainly associated with inward actions or the deeds of the heart, while Islam is associated with outward actions or deeds of the senses. Even when the testimony of faith is counted among the verbal ac-

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tions of Iman; it is, however, reflected in the explicit acts of worship of Muslims including prayers, fasting, zakat and Hajj.

On the other hand, the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) defined Iman as Islam in the hadith narrated by ibn 'Abass on receiving the delegates of the tribe of 'Abdul-Qays. The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) said: "I order you (to do) four (things): to believe in Allah, that is, to testify that there is no god but Allah and that Muhammad is His Messenger, offer prayers, pay Zakat and to pay the Khumus (i.e. one-fifth) of the war booty to Allah." Here, the prophet (peace and blessings upon him) explained Iman likewise Islam.

To conclude:

Islam is interpreted in its absolute sense through the explicit acts of worship: saying the two testifications of faith, offering prayers, paying zakat, fasting and performing Hajj and so forth. These acts are considered the five pillars of Islam.

Iman includes verbal deeds, actions and strong belief: the heart and tongue admit with faith while the heart and senses work for it. Verbal deeds include remembering Allah [Dhikr], reading Qur'an, supplicating Allah, enjoining what is good and urging others to do it, forbidding what is evil and warning others against it, teaching and guiding those who go astray to the right path, sending or answering back greetings and the like.

On the other hand, one's actions spring from his heart and are reflected upon his senses. Meaning, the heart loves or hates for the sake of Allah, satisfaction with Allah's destiny, patience in times of afflictions, fearing and seeking His pleasure, putting our trust in Him and asking Him for forgiveness. The actions of senses include: bowing, prostration, standing and sitting before Allah in prayers, Tawaf [circumambulating the ka'ba] in Hajj, Jihad [fighting in the cause of Allah] and so on and so forth.

Believing in Allah

Monotheism – One God

The religion of Islam is based on one core belief, that there is no god worthy of worship but God. When a person embraces Islam or a Muslim wants to renew or confirm his or her faith, they profess their belief that there is no god worthy of worship but God and that Muhammad is His final messenger. *Ashadu an la ill laha il Allah wa Ashadu anna Muhammadan Rasulullah*, Saying these words, the Testimony of Faith, is the first of five pillars or foundations of the religion of Islam. Belief in God is the first of six pillars of faith.[1]

Muslims believe that there is only One God. He alone is the Sustainer and Creator of the universe. He is without partners, children, or associates. He is the Most Merciful, the Most Wise, and the Most Just. He is the all hearer, all seer, and the all knowing. He is the First, He is the Last.

“Say (O Muhammad), He is Allah, (the) One. Allah-us-Samad (The Self-Sufficient Master, Whom all creatures need, He neither eats nor drinks). He begets not, nor was He begotten; And there is none co-equal or comparable unto Him.” (Quran 112)

“He is the Originator of the heavens and the earth. How can He have children when He has no wife? He created all things and He is the All-Knower of everything. Such is Allah, your Lord! *La ilaha illa Huwa* (none has the right to be worshipped but He), the Creator of all things. So worship Him (Alone), and He is the Trustee, Disposer of affairs, Guardian, over all things. No vision can grasp Him, but His Grasp is over all vision. He is the Most Subtle and Courteous, Well Acquainted with all things.” (Quran 6:101-103)

This belief is sometimes called Monotheism which is derived from the Greek words ‘monos’ meaning only and ‘theos’ meaning god. It is a relatively new word in the English language and it is used to denote a supreme being Who is all-powerful, the One who is responsible for life, the One who rewards or punishes. Monotheism is directly opposed to Polytheism, which is belief in more than one god, and to Atheism, a disbelief in all deities.

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If we were to take into consideration the general meaning of the word ‘monotheism’ Judaism, Christianity, Islam and Zoroastrianism, and some Hindu philosophies could all be included. However it is, more commonplace to refer to Judaism, Christianity, and Islam as the three monotheistic religions and group them together; nonetheless, there are glaring differences between Christianity and Islam.

The concept of a trinity inherent in most Christian denominations ostensibly includes aspects of plurality. The belief that one God is somehow three divinities (father, son, and holy spirit) contradicts the concept of Monotheism inherent in Islam, where the Oneness of God is unquestionable. Some Christian groups, including those known as Unitarians believe that God is One and cannot be God and human at the same time. They take the words of Jesus in John 17:3, “the One True God” literally. However, the vast majority of Christians do not share this belief.

In the religion of Islam belief in One God, without partners or associates is essential. It is the focal point of the religion and it is the essence of the Quran. The Quran calls on humankind to worship God alone and to give up worshipping false gods or associates. The Quran urges us to look at the wonders of creation and understand God’s greatness and power, and it speaks directly of His names, attributes, and actions. The Quran commands us to reject anything that is worshipped instead of, or along with God.

“And I (God) created not the jinns and humankind except they should worship Me (Alone).” (Quran 51:56)

Islam is often referred to as pure monotheism. It is not adulterated with strange concepts or superstitions. Belief in One God entails certainty. Muslims worship God alone, He has no partners, associates, or helpers. Worship is directed solely to God, for He is the only One worthy of worship. There is nothing greater than God Alone.

“Praise and thanks be to God, and peace be on His slaves whom He has chosen (for His Message)! Is God better, or (all) that you ascribe as partners (to

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Him)?” (Of course, God is Better)

Is not He (better than your gods) Who created the heavens and the earth, and sends down for you water (rain) from the sky, whereby We cause to grow wonderful gardens full of beauty and delight? It is not in your ability to cause the growth of their trees. Is there any god with God? Nay, but they are a people who ascribe equals (to Him)!

Is not He (better than your gods) Who has made the earth as a fixed abode, and has placed rivers in its midst, and has placed firm mountains therein, and has set a barrier between the two seas (of salt and sweet water). Is there any god with God? Nay, but most of them know not.

Is not He (better than your gods) Who responds to the distressed one, when he calls Him, and Who removes the evil, and makes you inheritors of the earth, generations after generations. Is there any god with God? Little is that you remember!

Is not He (better than your gods) Who guides you in the darkness of the land and the sea, and Who sends the winds as heralds of glad tidings, going before His Mercy (rain)? Is there any god with God? High Exalted be God above all that they associate as partners (to Him)!

Is not He (better than your so-called gods) Who originates creation, and shall thereafter repeat it, and Who provides for you from heaven and earth? Is there any god with God? Say, “Bring forth your proofs, if you are truthful.” (Quran 27:59-64)

Footnotes:

[1] The six pillars of faith are belief in God, His angels, His prophets and messengers, all His revealed books, the Day of Judgement, and divine decree.

Believing in Allah

Belief in God _ part 1

Introduction

At the heart of Islam lies belief in God.

The core of the Islamic creed is bearing witness to the phrase, La illaha illa Allah, “There is no true deity deserving worship but God.” The testimony to this belief, called tawhid, is the axis around which all Islam revolves. Moreover, it is the first of the two testimonies by which a person becomes a Muslim. Striving after the realization of that oneness, or tawhid, is the core of Islamic life.

For many non-Muslims, the term Allah, the Arabic name of God, refers to some distant and strange deity worshipped by the Arabs. Some even think it to be some pagan “moon-god”. However, in Arabic, the word Allah means the One True God. Even, Arabic speaking Jews and Christians refer to the Supreme Being as Allah.

Finding God

Western philosophers, Eastern mystics as well as today’s scientists attempt to reach God in their own way. Mystics teach of a God who is found through spiritual experiences, a God who is part of the world and resides within His creation. The philosophers seek God through pure reason and often speak of a God as a detached Watch-Maker with no interest in His creation. A group of philosophers teach agnosticism, an ideology that holds that one can neither prove nor disprove God's existence. Practically speaking, an agnostic asserts he must be able to perceive God directly in order to have faith. God has said:

“And those who are devoid of knowledge say: ‘Why does not God speak unto us or why is not a [miraculous] sign shown to us?’ So said the people before them words of similar import. Their hearts are all alike...” (Quran 2:118)

The argument is nothing new; people in the past and present have raised the

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same objection.

According to Islam, the correct way of finding God is through the preserved teachings of the prophets. Islam maintains that the prophets were sent by God Himself throughout the ages to guide human beings to Him. God says in the Holy Quran that the correct path to belief is to reflect upon His signs, which point to Him:

“...Indeed, We have made all the signs manifest unto people who are endowed with inner certainty.” (Quran 2:118)

Mention of God’s handiwork occurs often in the Quran as the locus of divine revelation. Anyone who sees the natural world in all its wonder with open eyes and an open heart will see the unmistakable signs of the Creator.

“Say: Go all over the earth and behold how [wondrously] He has created [man] in the first instance: and thus, too, will God bring into being your second life – for, verily, God has power to will anything.” (Quran 20:29)

God’s handiwork is also present within the individual:

“And on earth there are signs [of God’s existence, visible] to all who are endowed with inner certainty, just as [there are signs thereof] within your own selves: can you not, then see?” (Quran 51:20-21)

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Belief in God _ part 2

Belief in God in Islam consists of four matters:

- (I) Belief in God's existence.
- (II) God is the Supreme Lord.
- (III) God Alone is entitled to worship.
- (IV) God is known by His Most Beautiful Names and Attributes.

(I) Belief in God's Existence

God's existence does not require proof by scientific, mathematical, or philosophical arguments. His existence is not a 'discovery' to be made by the scientific method or a mathematical theorem to be proven. Simply said, mere common sense bears witness to God's existence. From a ship one learns of the ship-builder, from the cosmos one learns of its Creator. God's existence is also known by answers to prayers, miracles of prophets and the teaching in all revealed scriptures.

In Islam, a human being is not seen as sinful creature to whom the message of Heaven is sent to heal the wound of original sin, but as a being who still carries his primordial nature (al-fitrah), an imprint on his soul that lies deeply buried under layers of negligence. Humans are not born sinful, but forgetful as God has said:

"...Am I not your Lord? They said: 'Yes, we bear witness...'" (Quran 7:172)

In this verse, the "they" refers to all human beings, male and female. The 'yes' confirms the affirmation of God's oneness by us in our precosmic state. Islamic doctrine holds that men and women still carry the echo of this 'yes' deep down within their souls. The call of Islam is directed to this primordial nature, which uttered 'yes' even before they inhabited the earth. Knowledge

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that this universe has a Creator is something instinctive in Islam and therefore it requires no proof. Scientists, such as Andrew Newberg and Eugene D'Aquili, both affiliated with the University of Pennsylvania and pioneers in the neurological research of religion, say “We are wired for God.”[1]

The Holy Quran rhetorically asks:

“...Can there be any doubt about God, the Creator of the heavens and the earth?...” (Quran 14:10)

One might ask, ‘if belief in God is natural, then why do some people lack this belief?’ The answer is simple. Every human being has an innate belief in a Creator, but this belief is not a result of learning or personal deductive thinking. With the passage of time, outside influences effect this innate belief and confuse the person. So, one’s environment and upbringing veil the primordial nature from the truth. The Prophet of Islam, may God praise all, said:

“Every child is born in a state of fitrah (a natural belief in God), then his parents make him a Jew, a Christian, or a Magian.” (Saheeh Muslim)

Often these veils are lifted when a human being is faced with a spiritual crisis and left helpless and vulnerable.

(II) God Is the Supreme Lord

God is the only Lord of heaven and earth. He is the Lord of the physical universe and the Lawgiver for human life. He is the Master of the physical world and Ruler of the affairs of men. God is the Lord of every man, woman, and child. Historically, only a few have denied the existence of the Lord, which means that throughout the ages people have, for most part, believed in One God, a Supreme Being, a supernatural Creator. That God is the Lord specifically contains the following meanings:

First, God is the sole Lord and Ruler of the physical world. Lord means He is the Creator, Controller, and Owner of the Kingdom of the heaven and

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the earth; they belong exclusively to Him. He alone brought existence out of non-existence, and all existence depends on Him for its conservation and continuance. He did not create the universe and leave it to pursue its own course according to fixed laws, thereafter ceasing to take any further interest in it. The power of the Living God is required at every moment to sustain all creatures. Creation has no Lord besides Him.

“Say (O Muhammad): ‘Who provides for you from the sky and the earth? Or who owns hearing and sight? And who brings out the living from the dead and brings out the dead from the living? And who disposes the affairs?’ They will say: ‘God.’ Say: ‘Will you not then be afraid of God’s punishment (for setting up rivals with Him)?’” (Quran 10:31)

He is the ever-ruling King and the Savior, the Loving God, full of wisdom. No one can change His decisions. Angels, prophets, human beings, and the animal and plant kingdoms are under His control.

Second, God is the only Ruler of the affairs of men. God is the supreme Law-giver,[2] the Absolute Judge, the Legislator, and He distinguishes right from wrong. Just like the physical world submits to its Lord, human beings must submit to the moral and religious teaching of their Lord, the Lord who sets right apart from wrong for them. In other words, God alone has the authority to make laws, determine acts of worship, decide morals, and set standards of human interaction and behavior. His is the command:

“...Surely, His is the creation and the command; blessed be God, the Lord of the worlds.” (Quran 7:54)

Footnotes:

[1] “Why God Won’t Go Away”. Science and the Biology of Belief, p. 107.

[2] God’s existence proven by the existence of a supreme Lawgiver is called the ‘ethical’ argument by Western theologians.

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Belief in God _ part 3

(III) God Alone Is Entitled To Worship

Islam lays much greater emphasis on how belief in God translates into righteous, obedient life and good morals rather than proving His existence through theological intricacies. Hence, the Islamic motto is that the primary message preached by the prophets was surrender to God's will and His worship and not so much the proof of God's existence:

“And We never send any Messenger before you (O Muhammad) without having revealed to Him: none has the right to be worshipped but I, therefore you shall worship Me (Alone).” (Quran 21:25)

God has the exclusive right to be worshipped inwardly and outwardly, by one's heart and limbs. Not only can no one be worshipped apart from Him, absolutely no one else can be worshipped along with Him. He has no partners or associates in worship. Worship, in its comprehensive sense and in all its aspects, is for Him alone.

“There is no true god worthy of worship but He, the Most Merciful, the Most Compassionate.” (Quran 2:163)

God's right to be worshipped can not be over emphasized. It is the essential meaning of Islam's testimony of faith: La ilah illa Allah. A person becomes Muslim by testifying to the divine right to worship. It is the crux of Islamic belief in God, even all of Islam. It was the central message of all prophets and messengers sent by God – the message of Abraham, Isaac, Ishmael, Moses, the Hebrew prophets, Jesus, and Muhammad, may the mercy and blessings of God be upon him. For instance, Moses declared:

“Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord.” (Deuteronomy 6:4)

Jesus repeated the same message 1500 years later when he said:

“The first of all the commandments is, ‘Hear, O Israel; the Lord our God is

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one Lord.” (Mark 12:29)

And reminded Satan:

“Away from me, Satan! For it is written: Worship the Lord your God, and serve Him only.” (Matthew 4:10)

Finally, the call of Muhammad some 600 years after Jesus reverberated across the hills of Mecca:

“And your God is One God: there is no god but He...” (Quran 2:163)

They all declared clearly:

“...Worship God! You have no other god but Him...” (Quran 7:59, 7:65, 7:73, 7:85; 11:50, 11:61, 11:84; 23:23)

What Is Worship?

Worship in Islam consists of every act, belief, statement, or sentiment of the heart which God approves and loves; everything that brings a person closer to His Creator. It includes ‘external’ worship like the daily ritual prayers, fasting, charity, and pilgrimage as well as ‘internal’ worship such as faith in the six articles of faith, reverence, adoration, love, gratitude, and reliance. God is entitled to worship by the body, soul, and heart, and this worship remains incomplete unless it is done out of four essential elements: reverential fear of God, divine love and adoration, hope in divine reward, and extreme humility.

One of the greatest acts of worship is prayer, invoking the Divine Being for aid. Islam specifies that prayer should only be directed to God. He is deemed in total control of every man’s destiny and able to grant his needs and remove distress. God, in Islam, reserves the right of prayer for Himself:

“And do not invoke, along with God, anything that can neither benefit you nor harm you, for behold, if you do it, you will surely be among the evildo-

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ers!” (Quran 10:106)

Giving anyone else – prophets, angels, Jesus, Mary, idols, or nature– a portion of one's worship, which is essentially due only to God, such as prayer, is called Shirk and is the most enormous of sins in Islam. Shirk is the only unforgivable sin if not repented from, and it denies the very purpose of creation.

(IV) God Is Known By His Most Beautiful Names and Attributes

God is known in Islam by His beautiful Names and Attributes as they appear in revealed Islamic texts without the corruption or denial of their obvious meanings, picturing them, or thinking of them in human terms.

“And the Most Beautiful Names belong to God, so call on Him by them...”
(Quran 7:180)

Therefore, it is inappropriate to use First Cause, Author, Substance, Pure Ego, Absolute, Pure Idea, Logical Concept, Unknown, Unconscious, Ego, Idea, or Big Guy as divine Names. They simply lack beauty and that's not how God has described Himself. Instead, Names of God indicate His majestic beauty and perfection. God does not forget, sleep, or get tired. He is not unjust, and has no son, mother, father, brother, associate, or helper. He was not born, and does not give birth. He stands in need of none as He is perfect. He does not become human to “understand” our suffering. God is The Almighty (al-Qawee), The One Incomparable (al-‘Ahad), The Acceptor of Repentance (al-Tawwaab), The Compassionate (al-Raheem), The Ever-Living (al-Hayy), The All-Sustaining (al-Qayyum), The all-Knowing (al-‘Aleem), The All-Hearing (al-Samee’), The All-Seeing (al-Baseer), The Pardoner (al-‘Afuw), The Helper (al-Naseer), The Healer of the Sick (al-Shaafee).

The two most frequently invoked Names are “The Compassionate” and “The Merciful.” All but one of the chapters of Muslim scripture begins with the phrase, “In the Name of God, the Most-Merciful, the Most Gracious.” The phrase is used, one might say, by Muslims more commonly than the names Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are heard in Christian invocations. Muslims begin in the Name of God and remind themselves of God's Compassion and

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Mercy every time they eat, drink, write a letter, or perform anything of importance.

Forgiveness is an important dimension of human relationship with God. Human beings are realized to be weak and prone to sin, but God in His tender mercy is willing to forgive. The Prophet Muhammad said:

“God’s mercy outweighs His wrath.” (Saheeh Al-Bukhari)

Along with the divine names “The Compassionate” and “The Merciful,” the names “The Forgiver” (al-Ghafur), “The Oft-Forgiving” (al-Ghaf-faar), “The Acceptor of Repentance ” (at-Tawwaab) and “The Pardoner” (al-Afuw) are among the most used in Muslim prayers.

Proofs of existence of Allah

Is There Evidence God Exists?

Yes. Allah has sent down miracles, revelations and messengers to give clear proofs He exists and more important, what we should do once we come to this realization.

Allah has sent prophets and messengers with many proofs throughout the ages for people to be able to clearly see with their own eyes and to be able to use their own senses the miracles and proofs pointing to the fact, Allah does in fact, exist.

Miracles of prophets and messengers of Allah have come to people through the ages. Moses (peace be upon him) showed many miracles to pharaoh and to the children of Israel. Plagues, locusts, water turning to blood, his stick becoming a snake, the voice in the burning bush and the parting of the Red Sea are clear miracles for the people of Moses time.

Again, Allah sent Jesus, the son of Mary (peace be upon him) with clear miracles for the people of his time. Speaking from the cradle while still a new born infant, creating birds from clay, curing the sick, giving sight to the blind and even bringing a dead man back to life, were all clear signs to the people to know Jesus (peace be upon him) was a messenger of Allah as was Moses before him.

Muhammad (peace be upon him) was the last and final messenger of Allah, and he was sent to all of mankind. Allah sent him with a number of miracles, not the least of which was the Quran. The predictions and prophecies of Muhammad (peace be upon him) have come true even in this century and the Quran has been used to convince even scientists of the existence of Allah.

[Please visit "Science Proves Allah": Watch video of famous scientists admit Quran is from Allah and even accept Islam]

The Quran is the best of proofs for the existence of Allah and today over one and half billion people memorize and recite from the exact text, in the exact same language it was revealed in; Arabic. More than 10 million Muslims have

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completely memorized the entire Quran from cover to cover, and can recite it from memory without looking at it.

No one sees or hears Allah, not even the prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). Nor are we able to use our senses to make some kind of contact with Him. However, we are encouraged in Islam to use our senses and our common sense to recognize this entire universe could not possibly come into existence on its own. Something had to design it all and then put it into motion. This is beyond our ability to do, yet it is something we can understand.

We know from the teachings of Muhammad (peace be upon him) the proofs for the existence of God (Allah) are most obvious to us in our everyday surroundings. Anyone with understanding would quickly acknowledge His existence provided they are not so stubborn as to ignore the obvious evidences right in front of us.

We don't have to see an artist to recognize a painting, correct? So, if we see paintings without seeing artists painting them, in the same way, we can believe Allah created everything without having to see Him (or touch, or hear, etc.).

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Where is God?

Some other religions teach "God is everywhere." This is actually called "pantheism" and it is the opposite of our belief system in Islam. Allah tells us clearly there is nothing, anywhere in the universe like Him similar to his likeness, nor is He ever in His creation.

He tells us in the Quran He created the universe in six "yawm" (periods of time) and then He "astawah 'ala al Arsh" (rose up, above His Throne). He is there (above His Throne) and will remain there until the End Times.

Allah has such complete Knowledge as to be able to Know all things past, present and future in all places at exactly the same time. The same can be said

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for His absolute Hearing and Seeing. In this way, His Knowledge, His Hearing, His Sight is everywhere simultaneously.

In this regard, the prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) told us He is as close to us as our jugular vein. He also explained Allah is "with us" when we are in sincere worship to Him and in times of need. Naturally, this would not compromise His existence outside of His creation.

The Quran offers us a more detailed understanding of Where (and Who) Allah is.

"Certainly your Lord is Allah, Who created the heavens and the earth in six yaum (days or periods of time), and then He Istawa (rose above) the Throne. He brings the night as a cover over the day rapidly, and the sun, the moon, the stars subject to His Command. Surely, His is the Creation and the Commandment. Blessed be Allah, the Lord of the universe!"

[Noble Quran 7:54]

"Indeed, your Lord is Allah, Who created the heavens and the earth in six yaum (days or periods of time), and then He Istawa (rose above), the Throne, disposing the affair of everything. No intercessor (can plead with Him) except by His Permission. This is Allah, your Lord, so worship Him. Won't you then remember?"

[Noble Quran 10:3]

"It is Allah who erected the heavens without pillars that you [can] see; then He Istawa (rose above) the Throne and made subject the sun and the moon, each running [its course] for a specified term. He arranges [each] matter; He details the signs that you may, of the meeting with your Lord, be certain."

[Noble Quran 13:2]

Who created the heavens and the earth in six yaum (days or periods of time), and then He Istawa (rose above) the Throne. The Most Beneficent! Ask Him, as He is Al-Khabir (The All-Knower of everything).

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[Noble Quran 25:59]

Who created the heavens and the earth in six yaum (days or periods of time), and then He Istawa (rose above) the Throne. You (mankind) have none, besides Him, as a Wali (protector or helper etc.) or an intercessor. Won't you then remember (accepting admonishment)?

[Noble Quran 32:4]

And indeed We (Allah uses the word "We" in the royal sense like the king who says, "We decree the following...", this is not in the plural) created the heavens and the earth and everything in between in six days and fatigue never touched Us (again, this is the royal "Us" not plural).

[Noble Quran 50:38]

He is the One Who created the heavens and the earth in six yaum (days or periods of time), and then He Istawa (rose above) the Throne. He knows what goes into the earth and what comes forth from it, what descends from the heaven and what ascends up to it. And He is with you (by His Knowledge) where so ever you may be. And Allah is the All-Seer of what you do.

[Noble Quran 57:4]

We observe from these statements a very logical approach to understanding the nature of God without comparing Him to creation or putting Him in His creation.

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What is the Origin of God?

Where Did God Come From?

Both the Bible and the Quran tell us God has always existed and there never was a time He did not exist. As such, He is the Eternal, without beginning and without end. He is the only creator and sustainer of all that exists and nothing

Proofs of existence of Allah

and no one exists alongside Him, nor does He have any partners. He tells us, He is not created, nor is He like His creation in anyway. He calls Himself by a number of names and three of them are:

The First – (Al-Awal)

The Last – (Al Akhir)

The Eternal and the One who is sought after by His creation, while He has no need from them at all. (As-Samad)

He is not a man and He has no progeny or offspring.

He is not what He creates nor is He compared to it.

He always has existed and He never was created, as He is not like His creation, nor similar to it, in any way.

The prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) explained the devil would come to a person and ask them questions about creation; "Who created this or that?" to which the reply would be; "Allah" until he would ask; "Who created Allah?" At this stage the prophet advised us to drop this train of thought. Obviously, God – the real God, must be eternal and not have to be created.

The Quran tells us:

Allah! La ilaha illa Huwa (There is no god to worship except Him), the Ever Living, the Sustainer and Protector of all that exists. He doesn't get tired and He doesn't sleep. Everything in the universe belongs to Him. Who then, could intercede between Him and his creatures without His Permission? He Knows everything about them and they have no knowledge except as He wills. His kursi (stool or chair) extends over the entire universe and He doesn't get tired of guarding and preserving it. He is Most High, the Most Great.

[This Verse is called Ayat-ul-Kursi.] [Noble Quran 2:255]

This verse truly presents the comprehensive representation of God in a way without trying to define Him by comparing Him to His creation, but rather as being the Absolute in all of His Attributes and Characteristics.

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Proofs of existence of Allah

How Can we Prove There is a God?

Note: "Proving" God exists is really not our purpose. We are only interested in providing clear statements based on facts and logic and then allow the individual decide for themselves who they would like to believe. There have always been people who believed in the existence of God and there have always been those who have denied His existence. We must realize there are those who will never believe no matter how much proof or evidence we produce. The reason is some people don't want to believe in a Creator or Sustainer. They would not like to consider one day they will have to answer for their actions and for their refusal to acknowledge their Benefactor to whom they owe their very existence. We come to know it is not so much a matter of us trying to convey our beliefs as it is for them to set aside preconceived prejudices against proper belief. Meaning: this is really a matter of guidance from Above. If they refuse even with evident proofs in front of them, this is not between us and them; it is between them and their Creator. Again, it is not our job to "prove" anything to anyone. We only need to present the facts in truth and allow the listener to make up their own mind.

We just begin with simple logic. When something is right in front of our eyes it is difficult to deny it, right? Asking rhetorical questions can be very helpful in presenting our case. Begin by asking the question; "Can you prove you exist?" Yes, of course you can. You merely use your senses to determine what you can see, hear, feel, smell, taste and you have emotions as well. All of this is a part of your existence. But this is not how we perceive God in Islam. We can look to the things He has created and the way He cares for things and sustains us, to know there is no doubt of His existence.

One approach is to suggest simple yet convincing experiments anyone could comprehend. For instance, say to someone, "Consider this the next time you are looking up at the moon or the stars on a clear night; could you drop a drinking glass on the sidewalk and expect it would hit the ground and on impact it would not shatter, but it would divide up into little small drinking glasses, with iced tea in them? Of course not."

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Another example is have them consider what might happen if a tornado came through a junkyard and tore through the old cars; would it leave behind a nice new Mercedes with the engine running and no parts left around? Naturally not.

Or ask someone to consider what it would be like if someone told us about a fast food restaurant operating itself without any people there? The food just cooks itself, files from the kitchen to the table and then when we are done, the dishes jump back the kitchen to wash themselves. This is too crazy for anyone to even think about.

After reflecting on all of the above, how could we look to the universe above us through a telescope or observe the cells in a microscope and then think all of this came about as a result of a "big bang" or some "accident"?

(see also "Quran")

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Allah and what he had created

Why did God create everything?

Allah says in His Quran He did not create all of this for any foolish purpose.
Allah Says:

And I did not Create the jinn and humans except they should worship Me.
[Noble Quran 51:56]

He created us for the purpose of worshipping Him, Alone and without any partners.

And He it is Who has created the heavens and the earth in six Days and His Throne was on the water, that He might try you, which of you is the best in deeds. But if you were to say to them: "You shall indeed be raised up after death," those who disbelieve would be sure to say, "This is nothing but obvious magic."
[Noble Quran 11:7]

Allah has created all we call the universe as a test for us. This is not our final destination. What we might consider to be "bad" or "good" could actually be quite the opposite.

Blessed is He in Whose Hand is the dominion, and He has the Ability to do all things.

(He's the One) Who has created death and life, so He may test you which of you is best in deed. And He is the All-Mighty, the Oft-Forgiving;

(He's the One) Who has created the seven heavens one above another, you can see no fault in the creations of the Most Beneficent. Then look again: "Can you see any rifts?"

Then look again and yet again, your sight will return to you in a state of humiliation and worn out.
[Noble Quran 67:1-4]

Allah and what he had created

The Quran tells us about the nature of mankind and how quickly we forget the many wonderful blessings provided to us daily. Allah describes our attitude clearly in His Quran:

And when some hurt touches man, he cries to his Lord (Allah Alone), turning to Him in repentance, but when He bestows a favor upon him from Himself, he forgets that for which he cried for before, and he sets up rivals to Allah, in order to mislead others from His Path. Say: "Take pleasure in your disbelief for a while: surely, you are (one) of the dwellers of the Fire!"

[Noble Quran 39:8]

We forget, as we were created to forget. And this is a part of our test. Will we only use a selective memory and overlook what we owe to our Creator and Sustainer? Or will we be appreciative even when we are suffering some hardship or setback in this life?

As for mankind, whenever his Lord tests him giving him honor and gifts, he says (bragging): "My Lord honors me."

But whenever He tests him by withholding his livelihood, he says: "My Lord has disgraced me!"

[Noble Quran 89:15-16]

Then Allah makes clear to us the real reasoning behind all that is taking place:

Nay! But (it is because) you do not treat orphans with kindness and generosity.

And you do not encourage feeding of the poor!

And you devour inheritance with greed,

And you love wealth with abounding love!

[Noble Quran 89:17-20]

Allah has created us and given us so much, yet we are so careless concerning His Right to be worshipped exclusively and deny the Day of Judgment

Allah and what he had created

wherein we will all be asked concerning His Generosity.

O man! What has made you careless concerning your Lord, the Most Generous?

Who created you, fashioned you perfectly, and gave you due proportion;

In whatever form He willed, He put you together.

Nay! But you deny the Recompense (reward for good deeds and punishment for evil deeds).

[Noble Quran 82:6-9]

And how will we view our condition and surroundings? And how will we treat others around us? Are we considerate of others and are we quick to blame or quick to forgive? All of these things are a part of our test, the things we will be asked about on the Day of Judgment.

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Will all of us be treated equally ?

Will Everyone Be Treated Fairly?

Yes, absolutely. Allah always treats everyone with justice and fairness.

But read these verses of the Quran carefully, especially about the "People of the Book" (Jews & Christians):

These are the Verses of Allah: We recite them to you (O Muhammad peace be upon him) in truth, and Allah wills no injustice to the 'Alamin (mankind and jinns).

And to Allah belongs all that is in the heavens and all that is in the earth. And all matters go back (for decision) to Allah.

You [true believers in Islamic Monotheism, and real followers of Prophet Mu-

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hammad, peace be upon him and commandments with him] are the best of peoples ever raised up for mankind; you enjoin Al-Maruf (i.e. Islamic Monotheism and all that Islam has ordained) and forbid Al-Munkar (polytheism, disbelief and all that Islam has forbidden), and you believe in Allah. And had the people of the Book (Jews and Christians) believed, it would have been better for them; among them are some who have faith, but most of them are Al-Fasiqun (disobedient to Allah – and rebellious against Allah's Command). [Noble Quran 3:108–110]

Whoever believes in Allah, as One God and is working righteousness as much as they can – and follows the most recent prophet sent by Allah, peace be upon them all, could well be a Muslim (submitter to the Will of Allah) and as such, it is up to Allah to be their Judge, just as He is the Judge in all matters.

Does Allah Treat Jews and Christians the same as Muslims ?

Some may question whether or no the "People of the Book" (Jews and Christians) living today might be considered as being "saved".

Actually, the Jews and Christians who believed in Allah as One God – and they tried to obey the commandments of Allah and follow the messenger who Allah sent with their particular messenger (such as Abraham, Moses, Jesus, etc.) are mentioned many times in Quran:

They are not all are the same; among the People of the Scripture is a community standing [in obedience], reciting the verses of Allah during periods of the night and prostrating [in prayer].

They believe in Allah and the Last Day, and they enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong and hasten to good deeds.

And those are among the righteous. And whatever good they do – never will it be removed from them. And Allah is Knowing of the righteous.

[Noble Quran 3:113–115]

Let's further consider what Allah tells us in the Quran about them:

Allah and what he had created

Verily, those who disbelieved, and died while they were disbelievers, the (whole) earth full of gold will not be accepted from anyone of them even if they offered it as a ransom.

Those who die while disbelievers, will only receive payment of their good deeds here on earth, in this life.

But their deeds will not be accepted from them on Judgment Day, even if they spent the earth's fill of gold in what was perceived to be an act of obedience.

The Prophet was asked about 'Abdullah bin Jud'an, who used to be generous to guests, helpful to the indebted and who gave food (to the poor); will all that benefit him The Prophet said,

No, for not even one day during his life did he pronounce, 'O my Lord! Forgive my sins on the Day of Judgment'.

The Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, told us;

"If anyone of the People of the Book hears about me and the message with which I have been sent, and does not accept to surrender and submit to Almighty Allah in peace (Islam), then he will be in the Fire."

Allah tells us in the Quran, that He is the "Best of Judges" and certainly the final Judgment of us all rests with Him.

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Will Everyone Be Treated Fairly?

Yes, absolutely. Allah always treats everyone with justice and fairness.

But read these verses of the Quran carefully, especially about the "People of the Book" (Jews & Christians):

These are the Verses of Allah: We recite them to you (O Muhammad peace

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be upon him) in truth, and Allah wills no injustice to the 'Alamin (mankind and jinns).

And to Allah belongs all that is in the heavens and all that is in the earth. And all matters go back (for decision) to Allah.

You [true believers in Islamic Monotheism, and real followers of Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him and commandments with him] are the best of peoples ever raised up for mankind; you enjoin Al-Maruf (i.e. Islamic Monotheism and all that Islam has ordained) and forbid Al-Munkar (polytheism, disbelief and all that Islam has forbidden), and you believe in Allah. And had the people of the Book (Jews and Christians) believed, it would have been better for them; among them are some who have faith, but most of them are Al-Fasiqun (disobedient to Allah – and rebellious against Allah's Command). [Noble Quran 3:108–110]

Whoever believes in Allah, as One God and is working righteousness as much as they can – and follows the most recent prophet sent by Allah, peace be upon them all, could well be a Muslim (submitter to the Will of Allah) and as such, it is up to Allah to be their Judge, just as He is the Judge in all matters.

Does Allah Treat Jews and Christians the same as Muslims ?

Some may question whether or no the "People of the Book" (Jews and Christians) living today might be considered as being "saved".

Actually, the Jews and Christians who believed in Allah as One God – and they tried to obey the commandments of Allah and follow the messenger who Allah sent with their particular messenger (such as Abraham, Moses, Jesus, etc.) are mentioned many times in Quran:

They are not all are the same; among the People of the Scripture is a community standing [in obedience], reciting the verses of Allah during periods of the night and prostrating [in prayer].

They believe in Allah and the Last Day, and they enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong and hasten to good deeds.

And those are among the righteous. And whatever good they do – never will

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it be removed from them. And Allah is Knowing of the righteous.
[Noble Quran 3:113-115]

Let's further consider what Allah tells us in the Quran about them:

Verily, those who disbelieved, and died while they were disbelievers, the (whole) earth full of gold will not be accepted from anyone of them even if they offered it as a ransom.

Those who die while disbelievers, will only receive payment of their good deeds here on earth, in this life.

But their deeds will not be accepted from them on Judgment Day, even if they spent the earth's fill of gold in what was perceived to be an act of obedience.

The Prophet was asked about 'Abdullah bin Jud'an, who used to be generous to guests, helpful to the indebted and who gave food (to the poor); will all that benefit him The Prophet said,

No, for not even one day during his life did he pronounce, 'O my Lord! Forgive my sins on the Day of Judgment'.

The Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, told us;

"If anyone of the People of the Book hears about me and the message with which I have been sent, and does not accept to surrender and submit to Almighty Allah in peace (Islam), then he will be in the Fire."

Allah tells us in the Quran, that He is the "Best of Judges" and certainly the final Judgment of us all rests with Him.

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Did God create evil too?

Is God Pure, Good, Loving and Fair?

If so, then where does evil, hatred and injustice come from?

Allah tells us He is Pure, Loving, and absolutely Just in every respect. He says He is the Best of Judges. He also tells us the life we are in here is a test. He has created everything existing and He created whatever happens as well. There is nothing in this existence except what He has created. He also says in the Quran He created evil (although He is not evil). He is using this as one of the many tests for us.

Consider people who do so much evil in the earth and then live to a ripe old age in the splendor and wealth of their ill-gotten gains and die without ever being taken to task for their deeds. Where is the justice or fairness in this? Allah provides a clear answer for us in Quran as to what is in store for these most evil of people:

A brief enjoyment in this world! – and then unto Us will be their return, then We shall make them taste the severest torment because they used to disbelieve [in Allah, belie His Messengers, deny and challenge His proofs, signs, verses, etc.] [Noble Quran 10:70]

That Day mankind will proceed in scattered groups that they may be shown their deeds.

So whoever does good equal to the weight of an atom, shall see it.

And whoever does evil equal to the weight of an atom, shall see it.
[Noble Quran 99:6–8]

Do people think that they will be left alone because they say: "We believe," and will not be tested.

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And We indeed tested those who were before them. And Allah will certainly make (it) known (the truth of) those who are true, and will certainly make (it) known (the falsehood of) those who are liars, (although Allah knows all that before putting them to test).

Or those who do evil deeds think that they can outstrip Us (i.e. escape Our Punishment)? Evil is that which they judge!

Whoever hopes for the Meeting with Allah, then Allah's Term is surely coming. And He is the All-Hearer, the All-Knower.

And whosoever strives, he strives only for himself. Verily, Allah is free of all wants from the 'Alamin (mankind, jinns, and all that exists).

Those who believe [in the Oneness of Allah (Monotheism) and in Messenger Muhammad peace be upon him , and do not apostate because of the harm they receive from the polytheists], and do righteous good deeds, surely, We shall remit from them their evil deeds and shall reward them according to the best of that which they used to do.

And We have enjoined on man to be good and dutiful to his parents, but if they strive to make you join with Me (in worship) anything (as a partner) of which you have no knowledge, then obey them not. Unto Me is your return, and I shall tell you what you used to do.

And for those who believe (in the Oneness of Allah and other items of Faith) and do righteous good deeds, surely, We shall make them enter in (the entrance of) the righteous (i.e. in Paradise).

Of mankind are some who say: "We believe in Allah," but if they are made to suffer for the sake of Allah, they consider the trial of mankind as Allah's punishment, and if victory comes from your Lord, (the hypocrites) will say: "Verily! We were with you (helping you)." Is not Allah Best Aware of what is in the breast of the 'Alamin (mankind and jinns)?

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Verily, Allah knows those who believe, and verily, He knows the hypocrites [i.e. Allah will test the people with good and hard days to discriminate the good from the wicked (although Allah knows all that before putting them to test)].

[Noble Quran 29:2-11]

Reward and punishment are definitely a part of the Next Life on a very permanent basis. Those who suffer in this life and seemly have nothing to show for all their hard works, good deeds and sacrifices and maintaining the faith can look forward to a far greater reward in a place where these things will not be temporary but rather they will be for eternity. Those who corrupt, violate, injure and do evil and destruction seem to escape any justice here, yet in the Next Life they too will see the fruits of their labors, and certainly they will be paid according to what they have done as well.

As regards oppression, this is something Allah forbids for Himself to do to anyone and He hates it when anyone oppresses someone else. He does have absolute power over everything. He allows sickness, disease, death and even oppression so we can all be tested in what we do.

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Allah's Monotheism

Monotheism – One God

The religion of Islam is based on one core belief, that there is no god worthy of worship but Allah. When a person embraces Islam or a Muslim wants to renew or confirm his or her faith, they profess their belief that there is no god worthy of worship but Allah and that Muhammad is His final messenger. Ashadu an la illaha ila Allah wa Ashadu anna Muhammadan Rasulullah, Saying these words, the Testimony of Faith, is the first of five pillars or foundations of the religion of Islam. Belief in God is the first of six pillars of faith.[1]

Muslims believe that there is only One God. He alone is the Sustainer and Creator of the universe. He is without partners, children, or associates. He is the Most Merciful, the Most Wise, and the Most Just. He is the all hearer, all seer, and the all knowing. He is the First, He is the Last.

“Say (O Muhammad), He is Allah, (the) One. Allah-us-Samad (The Self-Sufficient Master, Whom all creatures need, He neither eats nor drinks). He begets not, nor was He begotten; And there is none co-equal or comparable unto Him.” (Quran 112)

“He is the Originator of the heavens and the earth. How can He have children when He has no wife? He created all things and He is the All-Knower of everything. Such is Allah, your Lord! La ilaha illa Huwa (none has the right to be worshipped but He), the Creator of all things. So worship Him (Alone), and He is the Trustee, Disposer of affairs, Guardian, over all things. No vision can grasp Him, but His Grasp is over all vision. He is the Most Subtle and Courteous, Well Acquainted with all things.” (Quran 6:101-103)

This belief is sometimes called Monotheism which is derived from the Greek words ‘monos’ meaning only and ‘theos’ meaning god. It is a relatively new word in the English language and it is used to denote a supreme being Who is all-powerful, the One who is responsible for life, the One who rewards or punishes. Monotheism is directly opposed to Polytheism, which is belief in more than one god, and to Atheism, a disbelief in all deities.

If we were to take into consideration the general meaning of the word ‘mon-

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otheism' Judaism, Christianity, Islam and Zoroastrianism, and some Hindu philosophies could all be included. However it is, more commonplace to refer to Judaism, Christianity, and Islam as the three monotheistic religions and group them together; nonetheless, there are glaring differences between Christianity and Islam.

The concept of a trinity inherent in most Christian denominations ostensibly includes aspects of plurality. The belief that one God is somehow three divinities (father, son, and holy spirit) contradicts the concept of Monotheism inherent in Islam, where the Oneness of God is unquestionable. Some Christian groups, including those known as Unitarians believe that God is One and cannot be God and human at the same time. They take the words of Jesus in John 17:3, "the One True God" literally. However, the vast majority of Christians do not share this belief.

In the religion of Islam belief in One God, without partners or associates is essential. It is the focal point of the religion and it is the essence of the Quran. The Quran calls on humankind to worship God alone and to give up worshipping false gods or associates. The Quran urges us to look at the wonders of creation and understand God's greatness and power, and it speaks directly of His names, attributes, and actions. The Quran commands us to reject anything that is worshipped instead of, or along with God.

"And I (God) created not the jinns and humankind except they should worship Me (Alone)." (Quran 51:56)

Islam is often referred to as pure monotheism. It is not adulterated with strange concepts or superstitions. Belief in One God entails certainty. Muslims worship God alone, He has no partners, associates, or helpers. Worship is directed solely to God, for He is the only One worthy of worship. There is nothing greater than God Alone.

"Praise and thanks be to God, and peace be on His slaves whom He has chosen (for His Message)! Is God better, or (all) that you ascribe as partners (to Him)?" (Of course, God is Better)

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Is not He (better than your gods) Who created the heavens and the earth, and sends down for you water (rain) from the sky, whereby We cause to grow wonderful gardens full of beauty and delight? It is not in your ability to cause the growth of their trees. Is there any god with God? Nay, but they are a people who ascribe equals (to Him)!

Is not He (better than your gods) Who has made the earth as a fixed abode, and has placed rivers in its midst, and has placed firm mountains therein, and has set a barrier between the two seas (of salt and sweet water). Is there any god with God? Nay, but most of them know not.

Is not He (better than your gods) Who responds to the distressed one, when he calls Him, and Who removes the evil, and makes you inheritors of the earth, generations after generations. Is there any god with God? Little is that you remember!

Is not He (better than your gods) Who guides you in the darkness of the land and the sea, and Who sends the winds as heralds of glad tidings, going before His Mercy (rain)? Is there any god with God? High Exalted be God above all that they associate as partners (to Him)!

Is not He (better than your so-called gods) Who originates creation, and shall thereafter repeat it, and Who provides for you from heaven and earth? Is there any god with God? Say, "Bring forth your proofs, if you are truthful." (Quran 27:59-64)

Footnotes:

[1] The six pillars of faith are belief in God, His angels, His prophets and messengers, all His revealed books, the Day of Judgement, and divine decree.

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The Inclusiveness of Islam : A Religion for All Humanity

Obedience to Prophet Muhammad a Must for All

Before discussing how the laws of Islam are universal, it is important to briefly discuss the issue of those who are following earlier confirmed prophets of God. These people may argue that the Prophet Muhammad may have been truthful, but that it is sufficient for them to follow the Prophet that they have been following.

In reality, no one has the right to accept the other prophets while rejecting the Prophet Muhammad, may the mercy and blessings of God be upon him. No one has the right to say that Muhammad was truthful but, “I chose to still follow Jesus or Moses instead.” Logically speaking, one should not expect this to be acceptable to God. God has sent His final messenger to be believed in and followed, superseding and canceling what is left of the teachings of earlier prophets. In the Quran, God describes such an attitude:

“And when it is said to them, ‘Believe in what God has sent down,’ they say, ‘We believe in what was sent down to us.’ And they disbelieve in that which came after it, while it is the truth confirming what is with them...” (Quran 2:91)

God has further declared people of this nature to be disbelievers. He has said:

“Verily, those who disbelieve in God and His Messengers and wish to make distinction between God and His Messengers (by believing in God and disbelieving in His Messengers) saying, ‘We believe in some but reject others,’ and wish to adopt a way in between. They are in truth disbelievers. And We have prepared for the disbelievers a humiliating torment. And those who believe in God and His Messengers and make no distinction between any of them, We shall give them their rewards, and God is Ever Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.” (Quran 4:150-152)

The Prophet said:

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“[I swear] by [God], the One in whose hand is my soul, there will be none of my addressed people, be he Jew or Christian, who hears of me and dies without believing in that with which I was sent except that he will be from the inhabitants of the Hellfire.” (Saheeh Muslim)

The Prophet even told one of his companions:

“If my brother Moses were alive today, he would have no option but to follow me.” (Ahmad and al-Daarimi)

Hence, the universality of Islam applies to all who were following any of the previous prophets as well. They have no logical option except to accept and follow Prophet Muhammad.

The Universality of Islam and Its Timelessness

As noted above, Prophet Muhammad declared that he was the final prophet sent for humankind. At the same time, it is inconceivable knowing the mercy of the merciful that He would leave humans without any form of clear guidance. In other words, what He gave this final messenger must be suitable to guide all of humankind after him until the Day of Judgment. In fact, the Prophet himself made this very same point in essence when he said:

“I have left with you two things that if you cling to them you will never be misguided after me: The Book of God and the Sunnah of His Messenger.” (Saheeh Muslim)

God has also said:

“...This day, I have perfected your religion for you, completed My Favor upon you, and have chosen for you Islam as your religion...” (Quran 5:3)

Thus, the religion is completed and perfected and there is no need for any alteration or change. The message has come and shall suffice until the Day of Judgment. The Prophet sent for all peoples has already come.

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This implies that the Prophet's teachings are valid and obligatory upon all of humankind. That is, his example and teaching was not simply for the people of Arabia at his time. Rather, it is just as valid and just as important for each and every Muslim today, whether he be in New York or Malaysia.

At this point, someone may logically ask: How is it that this Law is able to fulfill the needs for all of mankind until the Day of Judgment? Human society is changing day to day. How is it that one "law" can provide guidance for everyone at all times? The answer to this question has to do with the beauty of the Law. When one studies the law promulgated by Prophet Muhammad, one finds that it has the needed elements of flexibility that allow it to be just as practicable today as it was during time of the Prophet. In essence, those issues that need to be fixed and permanent are made such by the Islamic Law. Those that need to be flexible so that different peoples at different times may apply them differently are left flexible in the Islamic Law. Hence, it is a Divinely guided way of life that is suitable and practical for all humans until the Day of Judgment.

The Inclusiveness of Islam : A Guidance Complete and Sufficient Forever

Thus, first, in reality, human nature actually does not change over time. Laws or guidance covering moral and ethical behavior shall always remain the same, because what is damaging to the soul at one time will always be damaging to the soul, again due to the fact that human nature does not change. For example, lying and cheating are displeasing to the Lord and harmful to the soul and shall forever remain that way. Thus, laws and guidance related to issues of this nature remain fixed and completely applicable until the Day of Judgment. Ritual acts of worship, which underline the foundation of a human's character, also do not need to change. God alone knows how He is to be worshipped, and if He has declared these acts as proper and acceptable to Him until the Day of Judgment, no one can possibly say otherwise. In describing these kinds of laws or guidance, one can say that Islamic Law is rigid, but that

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is only because it should be rigid on these points. That, in no way, affects its universality and practicality for all times and places.

Second, there are some harmful matters that humans must avoid. These have also been explicitly and permanently forbidden. Alcohol and intoxicants, for example, will always be harmful for humankind. Every now and then, humans may find something beneficial about alcohol, as God also alludes to in the Quran, but overall no society can rightly argue that alcohol consumption is something good. One need only consider the social costs of drinking in the United States alone. Many families are torn apart due to alcohol abuse. Driving under the influence is recognized as a danger to society, and although great steps have been taken to control it, numerous people are still killed or severely injured due to alcohol. Many alcoholics cannot hold down jobs and thus become dependent on the state, putting the burden of their care on the rest of the citizens. When it comes to issues of this nature, Islam forbids such a practice forever as there can be no serious argument given that alcohol should be permitted. (Indeed, one can argue that it is only permitted today because the cost of keeping people from this addicting “drug” is prohibitive. This, in reality, is just another sign of how dangerous and evil alcohol is.)

Third, beyond that, humans need only some detailed laws but many general principles that allow them to guide their lives in all times and places. This is exactly what Islamic Law provides for them. Thus, God provides detailed laws about what kinds of food one may eat, inheritance, who is legal as a spouse, international relations and so on. From these detailed laws, a scholar is able to extract rulings for many new occasions. From the general principles, a scholar can derive guidance for various issues that did not occur during, for example, the time of the Prophet.

Fourth, in the realm of social contracts and business, for example, the general principle is that everything is permissible unless there is evidence to show otherwise. Hence, Islamic Law actually allows for a great deal of freedom within the Law. In business dealings, for example, Islam has prohibited interest, overly risky transactions, gambling, fraud, deception, sale or purchase of illegal items and coercion. In general, these are the harmful aspects that have

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been prohibited. In other words, the guidance is such that when new forms of business dealings are developed, as in modern times, one can determine which are acceptable according to Islamic guidelines and which are not. Thus, Islamic Law has been proven to be feasible for over 1400 years and, according to Islamic beliefs, will continue to be feasible until the Day of Judgment. Two businessmen are able to come up with any form of contract they wish, as long as the basic forbidden and harmful aspects are avoided. One cannot even imagine how many types of transactions are therefore permissible under Islamic Law.

Finally, it must be recognized that this complete and comprehensive guidance that will remain viable until the Day of Judgment is a great blessing from God, and is another sign that humans must turn to God for guidance. Humans on their own would never be able to find a way of life that is suitable even for just one place and time, not to speak of something that would be good for centuries or millennia—although humans would try to latch on to what they were following in the past. Sayyid Qutb has eloquently noted this point when he wrote,

When a human being tries to construct a metaphysical concept or a system of life through his own efforts, this concept or system cannot be comprehensive. It can only be partially valid, good for one time and place but not for other times and other places, and appropriate for one set of circumstances but not for another. Furthermore, even in tackling a single problem, he is incapable of looking at it from all possible sides and of taking into consideration all the consequences of the proposed solution, since every problem extends in space and time and is connected with precedents and antecedents beyond the scope of observation and comprehension of human beings.

We therefore conclude that no philosophy and no system of life produced by human thought can have the characteristic of “comprehensiveness.” At most, it can cover a segment of human life and can be valid for a temporary period. Because of its limited scope, it is always deficient in many respects, and because of its temporariness it is bound to cause problems that require modifications and changes in the original philosophy or system of life. Peoples and nations

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basing their social, political and economic systems on human philosophies are forever confronted with contradictions and “dialectics.”[1]

One need only look at one example which has been much debated recently to understand how applying God's guidance at all places and times is what is best for humanity. Circumcision is a well-known and established practice in Islam. In the past few decades, doctors and scientists—due to humans' very limited understanding of the reality of humans as a whole—keep going back and forth concerning circumcision. One decade they are in favor of it while the next they say that it is useless and harmful to the child. Now they have found—or they think they have found, as perhaps they could be wrong again—that circumcision is a great defense against HIV AIDS. Now, they are rushing to circumcise many of the men in different parts of Africa.

Perhaps, after so many cases like this, more and more humans will realize that there is guidance, complete and perfect, that has come from God that is exactly what all humans need and require, regardless of time and place.

The Guidance is Complete and Sufficient Forever

In sum, the guidance is complete and suitable for all times and places. It is all that the Muslims need for happiness in this world and in the Hereafter. It cannot be improved upon. It is, therefore, in no need of additions, alterations or deletions. Those who think that they can improve upon what God has revealed are arrogant in the purest sense and going beyond what they can possibly ever achieve. For this obvious reason, the Prophet gave very strong warnings about innovations, heresies and changes to the faith. Such things are not needed at all and they will simply take away from the beauty and perfection of Islam. Thus, the Prophet said:

“The worst matters are invented ones. And every innovation is a going astray.”
(Saheeh Muslim)

He also said:

“And every going astray is in the hell fire.” (al-Nasaai)

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The Prophet also said:

“Whoever introduces anything into this affair of ours that does not belong to it will have it rejected.” (Saheeh al-Bukhari and Saheeh Muslim)

Footnotes:

[1] Sayyid Qutb, The Islamic Concept and Its Characteristics (American Trust Publications, 1991), pp. 85-86.

The Inclusiveness of Islam : The Finality of Prophethood

What is meant here by “the inclusiveness of Islam” is that fact that Islam is for all times and places. Regardless of who a person may be or where he may be, Islam should be his religion and his way of life. This is just as much true for those who lived during the lifetime of the Prophet, may the mercy and blessings of God be upon him, or those who will live in 2525 (if God wills that there shall be such a year).

The correct understanding of this point revolves around a number of issues. The first important issue is that of the finality of prophethood as vested in the Prophet Muhammad. The second concerns the perfection of the religion and the manner in which it is able to guide humankind during all eras.

The Finality of Prophethood

God decreed that the Prophet Muhammad would be His final messenger. God says:

“Muhammad is not the father of any man among you, but he is the Messenger of God and the last of the Prophets. And God is Ever All-Aware of everything.” (Quran 33:40)

The Prophet Muhammad himself said:

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“I have been sent to all of the creation and the prophets have been sealed by me.” (Saheeh Muslim)

Again, he said:

“The Children of Israel were led by the prophets; whenever a prophet died, a prophet succeeded (him). Lo! There will be no prophet after me” (Saheeh Al-Bukhari, Saheeh Muslim)

Thus, there finally came the Prophet who explicitly declared that he is the final prophet. The Prophets who came before the Prophet—as far as can be seen from what is narrated from them—did not make such a claim regarding themselves. Thus, for example, in Deuteronomy 18:17-19, God is telling Moses that He is going to send another messenger “like unto him” in the future. In the New Testament, in John 14:15-16, Jesus speaks of “another Comforter” being sent by God. (Also in John 16:7-8 and John 16:12-13 Jesus speaks of someone coming in the future.) On the other hand, the Prophet Muhammad made it very clear that no prophet would come after him.

Being sent as the final messenger for humankind, there had to be some aspects that were unique concerning this last Prophet. These aspects include:

First, since no one could come later to correct any mistakes or distortions, the revelation received by the last prophet had to be preserved in its pristine purity. It is obviously beyond the scope of this short article, but a study of the history of the Quran and Sunnah would demonstrate that both of them were minutely preserved.

Second, the nature of the “sign” of the last prophet would have to be different as well. This is because this sign would have to affect not only the people who were alive during the time of the prophet, but also all those who would come later. The “sign” of the Prophet Muhammad was the Quran, and its miraculous nature can still be appreciated today and will continue to be appreciated in the future.

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Third, this final prophet could not simply be sent for one community among humankind—each then having their own final prophet and then differing with one another. This final prophet had to be sent for all of humankind, putting an end to the succession of prophets and being suitable for the world as a whole. The Prophet Muhammad was the only prophet to make it known that he was not sent only for a certain people, but rather for all the various peoples of the world. The Jews, for example, consider themselves to be a chosen race and that their message is meant exclusively for themselves. Thus, many orthodox Jews do not believe in proselytizing their faith. The New Testament also makes it clear that Jesus' mission was to the Tribes of Israel. Matthew 10: 5-6 read:

“These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.”

Jesus is reported to have said when the Canaanite woman came to him for help,

“I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (Matthew 15:24).
[1]

This limited mission of Jesus' is also affirmed in the Quran (61:6). In the case of the Prophet Muhammad, however, God says:

“Say (O Muhammad to the people), ‘O mankind! Verily, I am sent to you all as the Messenger of God...’” (Quran 7:158)

Another verse reads:

“And We have not sent you (O Muhammad) except as a giver of glad tidings and a warner to all mankind.” (Quran 34:28)

There are yet other verses giving the same purport. Prophet Muhammad also stated that he was distinguished from the earlier prophets by five matters. The

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last he mentioned was:

“[Before] a prophet would be sent to his own people only, while I have been sent to all of mankind.” (Saheeh Al-Bukhari, Saheeh Muslim)

Fourth, the laws and teachings of this message had to be fixed in matters that need to be fixed for all of humankind until the Day of Judgment and guiding yet flexible or accommodating in those matters that need to be open to change due to the changing circumstances of humankind. This shall be discussed in more detail below.

On all of these points, one sees that it is the message of the Prophet Muhammad that fits all of these criteria. Furthermore, all of these aspects make it quite clear that the Prophet Muhammad is qualified and sufficient to be the messenger for all of humankind and that the religion that all humankind should accept is Islam.

Footnotes:

[1] In the same context, Jesus is quoted in Matthew 15:26 as saying about helping the Canaanite woman, “It is not meet to take the children's bread, and cast it to dogs.” Again, God alone knows what parts of the Gospels attributed to Jesus were actually said by him.

Worshiping Allah

Worship in Islam : The Meaning of Worship

The concept and purpose of worship in Islam is unparalleled to any other religion in existence. It combines the mundane with the spiritual, the individual with the society, and the internal soul with the external body. Worship has a unique role in Islam, and through worship, a person is regarded as a true Muslim who accords his entire life to the Will of God.

The importance of worship may be seen in the fact that it has been prescribed by God in all religions prior to Islam. God said in the Quran:

“And assuredly We have sent among every people a messenger (with the command): worship God...” (Quran 16:36)

Worship in Islam has so many facets that it is difficult to describe them all in words. The most general meaning of worship in Islam is inclusive of everything which is pleasing to God, whether they deal with issues of belief, or deeds of the body. It may include everything a person perceives, thinks, intends, feels, says and does. It also refers to everything that God requires, external, internal or interactive. This includes rituals as well as beliefs, work, social activities, and personal behavior, as human being is a whole, such that every part affects every other.

Worship may be classified into two types:

- 1) Specific Beliefs, feelings and visible acts of devotion paid in homage to God which He has commanded.
- 2) All other acts of goodness generally encouraged in the life of a Muslim.

Devotion to God

This facet of worship entails that one fulfill certain deeds which God has commanded in His religion, whether they deal with the inner self or the outer body, and whether they be obligatory or voluntary. This facet of worship is not only limited to following His commandments, however, but it is also

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inclusive of leaving those things which He has forbidden. Worship in this sense, maybe defined as anything believed, felt, or done as an act of obedience to God.

In this respect, worship may also be called servitude, as it is in essence living one's life in complete servitude to God, doing what He commands, and avoiding what he forbids, as a slave lives within the will of his master. In essence all creations are slaves of God, whether they like it or not, for they are all subject to the laws He has placed within His creation:

“There is none in the heavens and the earth but comes unto the Most Beneficent (God) as an obedient slave.” (Quran 19:93)

“To Him submitted all creatures in the heavens and the earth, willingly or unwillingly.” (Quran 3:83)

But worship differs from servitude in that it must be coupled with love, awe and reverence. No act of obedience is regarded as worship unless it is coupled these feelings; one must love the action and love, hold in awe and have reverence for the One the action is being performed.

For this reason, in discussing this topic, it must be emphasized that worship is a right with is solely for God. Islam adheres to the strictest form of monotheism and does not tolerate that any act of worship be directed towards other than God. It is God alone who demands our obedience, and it is God alone who deserves our love. Any veneration of other deities besides God, whether they be demigods, prophets, angels, saints or martyrs, or their relics, statues or pictures, is considered as a breach in this monotheism, and a person is rendered out of the fold of Islam if committed. Even though one may justify that they venerate saints due to their service to God, or their relics as a remembrance of them, Islam does not differentiate between direct and indirect, or subordinate and superior worship. All worship and acts of veneration, homage and obedience must be offered for God alone.

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The Inner Forms of Worship

As mentioned earlier, acts of worship prescribed by God either deal with the inner self or the outer body. Those which deal with the inner self do so with belief and feelings. Humans are commanded to believe in certain ultimate truths, discussed in the articles of faith, and this is the most important aspect of worship. Belief is the basis for what a person feels and does – actions and feelings are a reflection of belief. If a person's belief is incorrect or weak, it will never produce the desired results in regards to their feelings or actions. For example, if a person incorrectly believes that God has forgiven them their sins due to their mere faith, their belief will not produce the desired feeling of fear which should be present in their heart, nor will this belief cause a person to cease sinning and perform deeds of righteousness.

God has also commanded us to maintain certain feelings in our hearts, both towards God as well as others of His creation. Muslims must love God, fear him, have awe in Him, place their trust in Him, and revere Him. Muslims have also been commanded to love their fellow Muslims, to have mercy and compassion towards them, to love righteousness and to hate sin. These are all considered acts of worship of the inner self because they are in essence a fulfillment of the commandments of God; Muslims will be rewarded for fulfilling them.

Worship in Islam : The Outer Forms of Worship

The Outer Forms of Worship

Throughout history, certain religions, due to their tampering, have placed more emphasis on the inner format of worship, wholly or partially dismissing the importance of the outer, while others have placed more emphasis on apparent and visible acts of rituals, diminishing the value of belief. As mentioned earlier, in Islam, there is no absolute separation between the inner and outer – the inner state produces and ought to produce outer manifestations, and outer conditions and actions have inner consequences. There is certainly a correspondence between the inner and outer state, and each tends to modify

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the other. All inner intentions lead to equivalent postures and actions. One can often judge a person's inner state by his outer. A person in despair or fear, for instance, has a certain posture and expression on his face. Conversely, if certain activities or postures are adopted then the equivalent inner state will result.

Visible acts of worship offered to God are fruits of the Muslim's belief. For this reason, not only does Islam demand that a person believe in the ultimate truths laid out in its doctrine, but it also demands that belief in God produce visible action. It is not enough for one to maintain certain beliefs for salvation, but rather deeds are essential in order for one to be successful in this life and the next.

God has commanded that Muslims fulfill certain commandments throughout the course of their lives, exemplified in the five pillars of Islam. These have been prescribed daily, such as the prayer, and annually, such as the compulsory charity and the fast of Ramadan, or as little as once in a person's life, such as the Hajj. There are many other acts of worship prescribed in Islam other than the five pillars, some of which are obligatory and others of which are voluntary, their performance left to a Muslim's discretion.

Though there is a ritual connected with these acts of worship, they should not be mistaken for ritualism or regimentation. Acts of worship must be done with full awareness of what one is doing and awareness of the presence of God. Actions performed mechanically or as habits produce only automatons and do not facilitate spiritual growth.

“It is not righteousness that you turn your faces toward the East or the West, but righteous is he who believes in God and the Last Day and the Angels and the Book and the Prophets, and gives his beloved money to his relatives and the orphans and the needy and for the ransoming of captives and who observes prayer and pays the poor-due; and those who fulfill their promises when they have made one, and the patient in poverty and affliction and the steadfast in time of war; it is those who have proved truthful and it is those who are the God-fearing.” (Quran 2:177)

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The Purpose and Benefit of Worship

God is not in need of our worship. Worship has been legislated in Islam and all other previous religions for the benefit of humanity, both in the individual and societal sense. Worship is essential for the maintenance of spirituality in the life of Muslims and its growth. Formal worship trains the individual to love his Creator and to develop constant awareness of God. God says:

“O people! Worship your Lord Who has created you and those before you in order that you may be of the God-conscious.” (Quran 2:21)

God also said to Moses:

“...And establish the prayer in order to remember Me.” (Quran 20:14)

Acts of worship serve as a means through which one remembers God and maintains a relationship with Him. Muslims perform prayer a minimum of five times daily in order to maintain this relationship. When a one supplicates, implores, praises God, recites verses from His revelation, which has been called “the Reminder”[1], along with other forms of worship throughout the day, they will gain the sense that the Power and Knowledge of God is present with them at all times, leading them to this sense of God-consciousness.

Worship also creates a strong sense within a Muslim to remove the evil within himself and in the community and environment and to establish the word of God throughout the world. God says:

“...Indeed the prayer prevents one from committing licentious and evil deeds...” (Quran 29:45)

Again, when a person spends his day performing specific acts of worship, they are constantly reminded of the purpose of life and their final end, and this in turn helps them to accord their lives to the Will of God, doing what He is pleased with and avoiding what He dislikes.

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One can clearly see the impact worship has on a collective level. Society is merely a conglomeration of individuals, and when individuals are spiritually and morally upright, the society itself will also be upright. Ideally, the society will be one which feels that God is ever-watching over them; one to which beneficent acts of kindness will be an inseparable adjective, and sin and vice will be confined and limited.

Although it may seem to some that worship and obedience to God is similar to imprisonment and slavery, the worship of God and servitude to Him actually liberates humans from all types of subjugation. A person break frees from the chains of society, peers, and family, and liberates him to please His One True Lord. This is true freedom that brings about security and contentment. Servitude to God is ultimate source of freedom.

Footnotes:

[1] This may be found in many verses, such as 15:9, 36:11, and others.

Worship in Islam : The Comprehensiveness of Worship

As mentioned earlier, the definition of worship in Islam is one which is comprehensive, including everything a person perceives, thinks, intends, feels, says and does. It refers to everything that God requires, external, internal or interactive. This includes rituals as well as beliefs, work, social activities, and personal behavior.

There is a distinction between that which is good, that which is evil and that which is neutral. A good thing is that which is according to the purposes and nature made by God. It leads to harmony and is, therefore, a reward in itself because it removes conflict and suffering. It follows that anything that accords with this must be a form of worship.

This Islamic understanding of worship allows the whole of one's life to be an act of worship, as long as the objective of that life is the pleasure of God,

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which is achieved by doing good and refraining from evil. A person can turn everyday activities into acts of worship by purifying his or her intention and sincerely seeking God's pleasure through these activities. God's Messenger, may the mercy and blessings of God be upon him, said:

“Helping a person or his belongings onto his mount is an act of charity. A good word is charity. Every step taken on the way to performing prayers is charity. Removing an obstacle from the road is charity.” (Saheeh Al-Bukhari)

Earning a living can be a form of worship. The Companions saw a man and were astonished by his hard work and industry. They lamented: “If he were only doing this much work for the sake of God...”

God's Messenger said:

“If he is working to support his small children, then it is for the sake of God. If he is working to support his elderly parents, then it is for the sake of God. If he is working to occupy himself and keep his desires in check, then it is for the sake of God. If, on the other hand, he is doing so to show off and earn fame, then he is working for the sake of Satan.” (al-Mundhiri, as-Suyuti)

Even the most natural acts can become acts of worship if they are accompanied by the proper intention: God's Messenger said:

“When one of you approaches his wife, it is an act of charity.” (Saheeh Muslim)

The same can be said for eating, sleeping, working and traits of good character, such as truthfulness, honesty, generosity, courage, and humbleness, can become worship through sincere intention and deliberate obedience to God.

In order for these otherwise mundane actions to be counted as acts of worship deserving of divine reward, the following conditions must be met:

A. The action must be accompanied by the proper intention. God's Mes-

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senger said:

“Actions are but by intentions, and a person gets only what he intended.” (Saheeh Al-Bukhari)

B. The action must be lawful in and of itself. If the action is something prohibited, its perpetrator deserves punishment. God’s Messenger said:

“God is pure and good, and He accepts only what is pure and good.” (Saheeh Muslim)

C. The dictates of Islamic Law must be completely observed. Deception, oppression, and iniquity must be avoided. God’s Messenger said:

“He who deceives us is not one of us.” (Saheeh Muslim)

D. The activity should not keep the person from performing his or her religious obligations. God says:

“O you who believe, do not let your wealth and children distract you from the remembrance of God...” (Quran 63:9)

As we see here, the concept of worship in Islam is not restricted to mere monasticism, meditation, or acknowledging the reality in which God has created us, nor is it one based upon mere ritualism and performance of certain actions with no apparent meanings. Rather Islam has combined the inner and the outer and has defined righteousness and placed for it a reward. It is this comprehensiveness of the concept of worship through which humans may fulfill the purpose for which they have been created. God says:

“And I have neither created jinn nor humans, except for My worship.” (Quran 51:56)

Humans are required to live not according to their subjective desires, automatisms, mental conditioning or according to the dictates of social, political or

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academic authorities, but in accordance with their cosmic purpose inherent in us: the worship God.

“So set you your face towards the straight religion, the nature (framed by) God with which He has created humankind. No change let there be in the creation of God, that is the straight religion, but most people do not know.” (Quran 30:30)

When one lives their life fulfilling those aspects which God has commanded, leaving those things which God has forbidden, and according each of their actions to the Will of God, their life, from morning until evening, from the time of birth until death, is turned into worship for which they will be rewarded. This was the state of the Prophets, as God says:

“Indeed, my prayer, my sacrifice, my living, and my dying are for God, the Lord of the all that exists.” (Quran 6:162)

When one achieves this state, they come into harmony with the rest of creation and return to their natural state of being, as all others of the creations of God are unconsciously in constant worship of God, as He has said:

“Do you not see that unto God bow down in worship (or submit in service and adoration) whosoever is in the heavens and whosoever is in the earth, and the sun, and the moon, and the stars, and the mountains, and the trees, and the beasts, and many among mankind...” (Quran 22:18)

